

ARENA



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NOTE:

ARENA 7 has the honour of printing several recent Chinese poems in translations by Dr. Arthur Waley: these poems cover aspects of the national struggle in the years leading up to the achievement of liberation.

With the essays on William Morris and on Coleridge (continued from No. 6) we begin the thorough tackling of the revaluations which we have set out as a main aim of the magazine. Edward Thompson in his essay is concerned with demolishing the false legend which has grown up round Morris. In later issues *Arena* will publish essays by him and others in which the positive evaluation of Morris will be attempted, as we believe that the clarification of what Morris stood for is an essential task if we are to understand truly our national tradition. The juxtaposition of Coleridge and Morris is not accidental; for Coleridge's effort to work out a dialectical philosophy is the first stable stage in the development that leads on to Morris, and which includes on the one hand the Chartist movement and its cultural effects or links, and on the other hand the thinking of Carlyle and Ruskin.

The essays by Montagu Slater and Jack Beeching deal with more immediate issues of our culture, its relation to the culture of the U.S.A. Here too, is a matter closely entangled with the problem of a vital development of our national culture, its elements organically linked with the life of our people in their struggles and aspirations.

The stories respectively by a South African and a Canadian, deal from different angles with the theme of racial prejudice, and remind us that the liberation-struggle, finding expression in the Chinese poems, has points of reference nearer home.

RECENT CHINESE POETRY

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR WALEY

Ma Fan-to

(1) SHANGHAI

MEN, turned into wolves.

Wolves must find a cave; men must find a house —
In the dark forest, in the purlieus of Shanghai;
The wolves trot busily.

Men that are savages, bestially strong.

Men at the railway station pushing and pulling.

The crush, the scuffle!

'I've myself to think of; I can't think of him or you.'

This was the price yesterday;

Today things have changed.

Result — millions nerve-racked,

Millions quaking at the knees.

Abundance — destitution;

Feasting — starvation.

Ice-cream lapped down in warm comfortable rooms —

The coolie's coarse hunk

Gnawed at in the cold

At the entry to the big provision store.

A few turn into Saints,

Or into tyrants with saintly faces.

Some, into ants; but ants of a kind that need

Investigation, careful investigation.

(2) SHANGHAI WINTER

I went round knocking at a million doors;

Each was closed tight.

There were people behind every door,

No spare place for me.

I went round looking at a million rice-bowls;

Each was clutched tight.

Many lives depended on each rice-bowl

No chance for me to snatch!

'To Shanghai, Shanghai!'
From every side they press
Like flotsam drifting with the tide.
It is winter, a cold wind is blowing;
Each day hundreds are frozen to death.

I went round asking millions of people
'Who in China is happy, who is free?'
For answer, not a sound!
For answer, sound of weeping.

SONG OF EXILE

Ma Yin-yin

(1)

Burdened with enmity, burdened with sorrow
I, drinking my own blood and sweat
Lonely traverse a wide desert,
Traverse the cold and tedious trails of Time.

What desolation, what silence!
Everywhere the same fearful wastes of wind and sand!
No fresh fountain, no tint of grass,
Nothing to stop my hunger.

But I stubborn and resolved,
Going my own way
Never once felt lonely,
Never felt the freezing cold;
For memories mounting like a fire
Kindled my anger,
My will to seek life.

(2)

The Past!
Myself like the child's wooden toy
That standing on a mock platform
Salutes each train that goes out or comes in.

The Past!
Myself, the soldier with tin-helmet and gas-mask,
In anti-mustard rubber suiting
Rifle cocked, hiding in a trench
Waiting for the word of command.

The Past!

Myself trying by primitive methods
To extinguish my natural instincts,
To strengthen my servile propensities,
Repress my own emotions,
Inhumanly, immortally turning myself into a machine.

The Past!

I watched while a crafty, treacherous man
With lies and legends wove a golden dream
Into the lives of men,
And I could see how by this
Countless people were deluded,
As sheep drinking in
The music of the herdsman's flute —
Turning docilely into livelihood-slaves, occupation-slaves, slaves
of subsistence.

The Past! Countless people

Sitting there — it was no better than a prison —
Worshipping Hope as their idol!

(3)

The day came when I saw myself;
Myself still an ox, a brute content to feed
On whippings and dregs.
I too was living in a huge prison,
A jail without walls!
I saw it clearly now: I had mistaken visions for reality.
I wept, I cried aloud;
I hated myself bitterly.

And so I thought of shooting myself;
But (from whom the salvation, the revelation?)
I did not follow the example of Mayakovsky —
Finish my life with a bullet.
In the end, with the sorrow of a Ch'u Yuan at my heart
I broke away from the Dying Monster's desperate cries.

The Dying Monster, unconscious of its impotence,
Still went on with its sophistries and lies.
I stole away quietly.
The others glared at me with enmity,
Cursed me with mouths inured to falsehood.
Cursed me for turning against their superstitions,
For rebelling against Fate.

Sadly I stole off, got clear away
Of everything that might be tainted
With the infectious bacilli of the Past.
Oh where were those that said I was mad
And those that said . . .
I am the sufferer from neurasthenia;
Contempt, derision, slander, threats, plots
(Like innumerable poisoned bullets)
Concentrate their aim upon me.

(4)

Enduring the cruellest insults,
Without smile or tear,
With silent resolution
And firm stride I marched on.
For I knew that in a world without justice
I could not hope for sympathy, encouragement, comfort or
respect.

Because I knew
That what the soul of the human race sought
Was not a corpse, not a dying monster.
What I looked for was light.
What I wanted to find and become
Was the awakened, wise, toiling and creative man.

I could not submit to evil and reaction,
I could not smirch my inviolable soul.
Though on this long and terrible journey
Often I saw the footprints of those
Who for their thoughts and beliefs
Had been persecuted, butchered, banished or enslaved,
Yet I did not tremble,
Give myself up for lost or fondle desolation.
Firmly, stubbornly as ever, I pressed on.

(5)

Come wind, come rain,
One camel, strong enough to bear a heavy load,
Will soon have traversed the great Desert from end to end.
And now, I feel a presage
Of gentle warmth in the air, descry
Harmony and Peace coming at last to the human race.
Now in the last days before the Great Thaw
I know just what song I should sing —

Of the world born anew,
Of the fair flower that thrusts at last
Into the very substance, the inviolate core
Of the Truth-seeker's soul.

I Men

(1) INTO BATTLE

(1) *The Groom*

The groom leads his horse
To drink at the little stony river.
'Comrade,
'Why don't you ride her yourself?'
'That's for the fighting men!' His huge cheeks
Grinned with yellow fangs, while lovingly
His fingers stroked the silver-shimmering steely mane,
As though he held a girl-child between his knees.
The mare shook her long tail,
Turned her cheek towards him and gave a long neigh.

(2) *The Veteran*

The veteran, on his lean horse;
Out of the thin mist of dawn
Came shadowy towards the copse
And shadowy again
Plunged into the deep mist.
Filthy peaked cap jammed down on lined brow,
Thick frost frozen on stubbly chin,
Steamy breath mounting,
Deep-set, small eyes closed,
Puckered jowls dangling,
Hands deep snuggled in folded sleeves,
Reins dropping on his horse's scraggy head;
His shadow
(Letting the slow, uncertain, fluctuating steps
Lead where they will) wearily humps along.
So day in, day out,
His sword slung across his back —
A speck of dirt,
A glint of steel,
A rust-hole,
A fleck of frost,
A splash of blood
Gleaming into the brow of dawn.

(3) *Refugees*

'Where do they come from?'

That's a thought that makes the blood run cold.

Their village — a pile of scattered bricks, broken tiles.

No houses — only a few willows and peach trees

Still standing by the path along the lake.

'Where are they going to?'

A long way,

Across vast stretches of wind-blown sand.

Coming from where there is war;

Going to where there is war.

(Written at Sian, December 28th, 1939.)

(2) THE SWORD

This thing that glints

Bright as a full moon,

Featuring sharp and clear,

Once was a tangle of scrap-iron;

In a dusty corner

It had lain tedious and useless months and days.

Now, fused by raging flame

And on iron anvil beaten into this.

What will you do with it? Put it in your book-room

Beside a pot of tulips?

Dangle it from soft scented waist

Along with those Han dragons carved in jade?

Will you put it in a priceless scabbard

Inlaid with pearls and gold?

Treasure it forever, where no eye can see, no hand touch?

Or wearing it will you with your high-mettled steed

At the stream quaff one last limpid draft,

Then gallop straight to colours fluttering in the morning
air

And join utterly in battle?

Don't take too much care of what you love and prize!

Scabbards can darken and trouble what once was bright,

Book-rooms can blunt keen edges,

What is treasured is thrown away.

What was a tangle of scrap-iron may be scrap-iron again.

Don't take too much care of what you love and prize!

E. P. Thompson

THE MURDER OF WILLIAM MORRIS

ON May 15th, 1883, William Morris declared during a lecture at Oxford that 'He was one of the people called Socialists, and he believed that Socialism would take the place of competition among men in the conditions of life, and that thus would art revive'. On the next day *The Times* reported:

'At the close of his address to the Russell Club of University College last night, Mr. Morris announced himself a member of a socialistic society and appealed for funds for the objects of that society. The Master of University then said to the effect that if he had announced this beforehand it was probable that the loan of the College Hall would have been refused.'

But it needed more than the banning of a College Hall to silence William Morris. During the remainder of his life he was to speak in many strange places — on cinder-heaps and tips and public highways, as well as in working-men's clubs and socialist clubrooms in Stepney or Bradford or Glasgow. Also, as he was to remark himself in a moment of anger in the Thames Police Court two years later, he was 'an artist and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe'. Such a man was not easy to ignore: he could not be hustled, fined, bullied and beaten up in the normal way; it was necessary to find different means of closing his mouth.

And so various stories were put into circulation. Morris was a 'sentimentalist', a 'capitalist', a 'post-upholsterer', an 'aesthetic socialist', or, more generally, the kind-hearted, unpracticable dupe of sinister men. Such stories could make poor headway in Morris's lifetime, when his uncompromising articles appeared weekly in *The Commonweal* or *Justice*. On his death the 'interpreters' of Morris were free to get to work. In the first full-scale 'Life of Morris' which appeared in 1899, by Dr. J. W. Mackail, we find the following comments on Morris and Socialism:

'... a disturbing influence . . . the patient revenge of the modern or scientific spirit, so long fought against, first by his aristocratic, and then by his artistic instincts, when it took hold of him against his will and made him a dogmatic Socialist.'

However, although Dr. Mackail shows a patent disgust at Morris's socialist period, the currency of scholarship had not been debased to the extent of to-day: the tradition of Victorian biography was still alive; and Dr. Mackail's work remains a standard biography for the reason that he quotes sufficiently extensively from Morris's letters, articles and diary to allow the intelligent reader to form his own evaluation.

Mackail's hint was soon taken up. Reviewing his book in the *Quarterly Review* in the same year, W. R. Lethaby and Robert Steele write:

'Morris was a Socialist because he rebelled against the capitalist system which imposes uniformity on craftsmanship and treats the workman as a mere unit, and against uncontrolled competition, which sacrifices beauty to cheapness; solid work to seductive shams and art to machinery. There was, in fact, nothing modern or scientific about Morris's Socialism. He turned to the Middle Ages, because what he detested did not then exist, but he never formulated a scientific scheme of Socialism. Indeed, *it is doubtful if he can be called a Socialist at all*; he objected as vigorously to the tyranny of collectivism as to that of capital. We are inclined to hazard the paradox test that, if Morris was a Socialist, he was so just because he was so intense an individualist.'¹ (*My italics.*)

For some years this gagging 'paradox' was seized upon by interpreters with avidity. Morris was clearly mistaken in thinking himself a Socialist. Thus G. K. Chesterton:

'Modern England will never exhaust her debt to William Morris. He was a very great Distributist. There seems to be a curious idea prevalent that he was a Socialist. Indeed, it was so prevalent that he was partly deceived by it himself.'

Or, if he was a Socialist, then he was one of the polite and aesthetic kind, with rather a gruff turn of phrase. Thus Max Beer in his *History of British Socialism* is able, in 1919, to find the influence of Morris 'still active':

... among the Guild Socialists, the Church Socialist League,² and literary men who are inclined towards Socialism, like Clutton Brock and John Drinkwater.'

Despite Morris's many acknowledgements of his debt to Marx and his profound enthusiasm for *Capital*, writer after writer siezes upon his good-humoured confession that he 'suffered agonies of the brain

¹ '... individuality, that unceasing cry of the bore and the dullard ...' Morris and Hyndman, *Summary of the Principles of Socialism* (1884). 'So besotted are we with the cant of individualism that the condition of even the prosperous working men is thought a fair result of all the thousands of years of the world's life.' (Article: *The Dull Level of Life, Commonwealth*, 1884.)

² A characteristic story, retailed by May Morris, may comment on this. After one of Morris's lectures, a clergyman, the Reverend Hopps, protested: 'That's an impossible dream of yours, Mr. Morris, such a society would need God Almighty Himself to manage it.' Mr. Morris got up and walked round his chair, then going across to Mr. Hopps and shaking his fist to emphasize his words, he said 'Well, damn it man, you catch your God Almighty—we'll have him'.

over reading the pure economics of that great work' * in order to show that Marxism was 'alien' to Morris' temperament. The characteristic explanation of Morris's split with the Social-Democrat Federation is in terms of the conflict of temperament between Hyndman and Morris. It is explained that Morris's personality was 'too big' to allow him to co-operate with other leaders; that the riff-raff of the rank-and-file Socialists never appreciated or sympathized with his views; that he was too much of an 'individualist' to accept party discipline. Any explanation, in fact, will get by, provided that it evades a serious analysis of Morris's rôle in the S.D.F. and Socialist League. Thus George Bernard Shaw writes:

'It may be asked why Morris, as a practical man, did not join the Fabians . . . The answer is that he would have been more out of place in our drawing-rooms than in any gang of manual labourers or craftsmen. The furniture would have driven him mad; and the discussions would have ended in his dashing out of the room in a rage, and damning us all for a parcel of half-baked, short-sighted suburban snobs, as ugly in our ideas as in our lives. He could be patient with the strivings of ignorance and poverty towards the light if the striver had the reality that comes from hard work on tough materials with dirty hands, and weekly struggles with exploitation and oppression; but the sophistication of middle-class minds hurt him physically . . . What stimulated me to argument, or at least to repartee, made him swear.'⁴

This paragraph is both generous and revealing. But what it does not reveal is Morris's fundamental theoretical opposition to the Fabians on the grounds that:

' . . . the clear exposition of the first principles of Socialism, and the criticism of the present false society (which later no one knows how to make more damaging than Mr. Bernard Shaw . . .) is set aside for the sake of pushing a theory of tactics, which could not be carried out in practice; and which, if it could be, would still leave us in the position from which we should have to begin our attack on capitalism over again . . . '

* A typical example of calculated distortion, employed only three years after Morris's death, may be mentioned. In the article 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894), Morris writes: 'I put some conscience into trying to learn the economic side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though *I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of Capital, I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work.*' Mackail, preferring to quote this, omits, without any indication whatsoever, every word in italics. No correction of the quotation is made in the World's Classic edition of Mackail, published in 1950.

⁴ Preface to *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, Vol. II, by May Morris. In spite of Miss Morris's occasional attempts to cover up the tracks of Marxism in her father's mind, this book must remain the most valuable published collection of William Morris's political writings outside the old files of *Commonweal*.

Nor does it reveal Morris's acute assessment in many of his writings of the historic rôle of Fabianism as it is being demonstrated to-day.

And so the work of the Master of University was completed in February, 1934, on the opening of the William Morris Centenary Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Mr. Stanley Baldwin was engaged to deliver the funeral oration (which he accomplished without mentioning Morris's revolutionary opinions), and the bourgeoisie sat back in their chairs and sighed with relief. The thing had been done most decorously; there had been no obvious violence, no signs of struggle, no blood; everyone was wonderful, the most unlikely people had rallied round to help. As William Blake put it:

'He smiles with condescension, he talks Benevolence and Virtue,
And those who act with Benevolence and Virtue they murder
time on time.'

II

But the bourgeoisie hadn't finished with William Morris yet. Having buried him, the next thing to do was to resurrect him, this time as an angel. The spade-work for this had been going on for a long time, and preliminary surveys had been made by the I.L.P., Bruce Glasier, a former colleague of Morris's, having made an attempt (in 1921) to explain away Morris's share in writing with Belfort Bax *Socialism, its Growth and Outcome* (one of the best examples of Morris's mature Marxist writings).⁶ Meanwhile J. Middleton Murry was wielding a lone pick on a different patch of ground and making startling discoveries. For instance, in an essay in the *Great Victorians* (1932), he finds: 'Morris was the truest Marxian Socialist this country has ever had. Had Morris been the only Socialist in all England, still he would have been a Socialist. If he had been the only Socialist in all the world, still he would have been a Socialist.' Morris, he finds, *was* IT — Socialism — and 'the signal honour of being that essence Morris shares with very few. With Robert Owen, with Marx, with Engels, with Lenin, perhaps with St. Simon'—and, we are lead to suppose, with J. Middleton Murry.

But this was not exactly the guise in which the bourgeoisie wanted Morris resurrected, and there must have been some qualms in 1934 when G. D. H. Cole's selection of Morris's writings appeared in the *Nonesuch Press*, making available for the general reader many lectures and articles long out of print. But Professor Cole, despite a competent and sensitive introduction, made no attempt in this place to define Morris's Socialism, and the way was left open for the ever-increasing references in the speeches and apologetics of Labour leaders and Right-wing trade union bosses to William Morris as a 'fore-runner' of the Labour Party, as a dreamer and Utopian whose songs

⁶ See article by R. Page Arnot, *William Morris versus The Morris Myth*; *Labour Monthly*, March, 1934. An excellent summary of the position at that time. The article was published in an expanded form as *William Morris: A Vindication*.

had helped to raise up the mighty edifice of Transport House, as a 'democratic' or 'British' Socialist as opposed to an alien Marxist. For a time these references are cautious and carefully worded, as though the authors have half a fear lest instead of the complaisant saint, the real man may thrust up his head, whiskers, 'temperament', and all. But lack of strenuous and unceasing opposition has made them brazen: until to-day every fiddling parliamentary private secretary or bloodstained champion of 'Western democracy' will mutter a public 'Halleluia' before his memory, and many sincere Socialists and trade unionists have been urged to assent to policies which would have aroused Morris's contemptuous disgust by the invocation of his name.

Since the end of the war there have been several publications relating to Morris. The late Mr. Holbrook Jackson's selection of his writings, *On Art and Socialism*, must be welcomed as making available yet more of his work to a wide public: that it has not shamed Labour apologists into silence must be due in part to their shamelessness and dislike of reading; in part to the omission from the selection of any extracts from the *Commonweal*; and in part to passages in Mr. Jackson's introduction such as the following:

'... the genial Communism which he preached, with its democracy, fellowship, handicraft and freedom, has become autocracy, with mechanization and standardization . . .'

Esther Meynell, whose *Portrait of William Morris* appeared in 1947, belongs to the Old School of apologists, and is clearly unaware of Mr. Baldwin's feat. She regards Socialism as an episode in Morris's life to be mentioned with pain and passed over with relief. After quoting from the *Quarterly Review*, she comments, with a simplicity of wish-fulfilment which deserves notice:

'Morris became a Socialist much more because of his heart than because of his head. He admitted that his attempts to read Karl Marx he found very heavy going. After a short time he found in spite of his most anxious desire to do so, that he could not march in step with the Socialists of his day. It was not surprising, for he and they were marching to different tunes. His own thinking on the matter is obviously muddled . . .'

In the same year appeared *The Warrior Bard*, by Edward and Stephanie Godwin. This is an Intimate book, which gives us Glimpses of the Spirit of the Bard, as revealed to the authors, who live (we are told on the dust-jacket) at Kelmscott House. The Bard is also revealed in imaginary pictures, and is found to have a Faraway look.

It might have appeared, then, in 1949, that there was little left for this generation to do for Morris. He had been buried, had risen from the dead, and seated on the left hand of Transport House. Certainly, we might have looked forward to a study of his sex-life, to be reviewed (as it may be) on the 'Books in General' page of the *New Statesman*, possibly by Mr. Peter Quennell. Recent treatment of Byron, Shelley, Ruskin among others—has shown this to be a fine

expedient for transforming a living influence into a pornographic curiosity." But Morris, perhaps, does not provide a rich field for this kind of research. Otherwise, he had been well and truly done.

III

But the resurrected Morris had not yet found (in England, anyway) his St. Paul. This is now remedied. His name is Mr. Lloyd Eric Grey, and it is appropriate that he is an American. Published in America in 1940, his book was exported for publication here towards the latter end of 1949 under the title, *William Morris, Prophet of England's New Order*. It has had a warm reception in most of that part of the bourgeois press which still troubles to notice books, including, one must note, a kind review from Mr. George Bernard Shaw in the *Observer*. It is a book which is careful to exhibit all the apparatus of scholarship. It is notable for two reasons: first, as the crowning achievement of nearly fifty years of patient work by tens of 'interpreters'; and, second, as an example of present-day bourgeois scholarship. There is no doubt that it will be accepted as a 'definitive' work, since Mr. Grey enlisted the assistance of most of the prominent surviving associates of Morris. It will find its way into most libraries, it will serve as a rock and anchor for future interpreters, and, therefore, it cannot pass without some notice.

There is no doubt that Mr. Grey knew what he was about. In his concluding chapters he reveals this quite explicitly:

'The common view of Morris . . . is that he was a great and noble poet and craftsman overflowing with humanity; a fine gentleman who loved the meanest labourers and associated with them on terms of equality; a man who gave from his own funds to those who were in need, and who spent the best years of his life in organizing the workers of Britain for the time when they might know "equality of condition". This is true of him and his Socialism. But to many modern workers he has been made to appear as a man who was in active and violent revolt against the capitalistic government; a man who, had the Revolution occurred, would have been found marching in the vanguard of the revolutionists, among the red flags' and the

* (February, 1951). This—written nearly a year ago—has proved to be prophetic. The reception accorded to *The Letters of William Morris* (edited by Philip Henderson), in several papers (including the *Observer* and *The New Statesman and Nation*) was notable for its reticence about the important letters brought to light illustrative of Morris's political and artistic theories, and for its speculation upon the more intimate details of Morris's personal life.

⁷ At the time of the unemployed 'church parade' at Westminster Abbey in 1887, a Mr. Joseph Pennell noticed William Morris in Parliament Street. 'Suddenly an enormous crowd began to pour out of the square down Parliament Street . . . On they came, with a sort of irresistible force . . . and right in front—among the red flags, singing with all his might the "Marseillaise"—was William Morris. He had the face of a Crusader, and he marched . . . as the Crusaders must have marched.' (Quoted by Aylmer Vallance: *William Morris, His Art, His Writings and His Public Life*, 1897, p. 341.)

clubs and bayonets of the proletariat; a man who was a proletarian leader in the State Socialist and sometimes in the State Communist sense; a man who favoured action and violence; a man who believed that the State—that all-powerful capitalistic factotum—owed to the workers the satisfaction of all their economic wants, and a man who believed that the workers must receive all the advantages of these things immediately, else there would be no equality. These latter views, as we have had occasion to observe, are not true.' (page 362)

Mr. Grey next finds occasion to observe what *is* true of Morris's Socialism:

'It was, in brief, a doctrine of give and take—of sportsmanship and of fellowship—that Morris urged upon the workers of Britain . . . Morris was a Socialist only in the etymological sense of believing that man must become a social animal. Yet socialmindedness did not exclude, in his system, individual qualities. Rather, he felt, individual qualities would tend to be encouraged by freedom of enterprise in working for the common weal, especially with sportsmanlike praise and friendly rivalry serving as the incentive to make men face work gladly.' (page 363)

Having marked Morris down as a sportsmanlike gentleman, believing in socialminded free enterprise, it remains for Mr. Grey (via the sentence: 'Morris was opposed to centralized ownership—whether in business or in politics. . .') to rename his Socialism a 'system of Distribution and Decentralization'; to establish Morris's prophetic relationship with Britain's New Order (I quote the passage in its entirety):

'That Morris had an unusually important part to play in the founding of the British Labour Party is indicated by a letter^a of Mr. J. S. Middleton, secretary of the Labour Party, Transport House, London, who wrote that, while he "had never associated Morris's activities with those of Transport House", nevertheless he could find himself "able to suppose" that "we (*i.e.*, Transport House and the Labour Party) are historical heirs to his activities."' (page 365);

and to sum up:

'He saw that the way of living in the world ought to be changed. That is why he advocated a basic but gradual revolution in the very foundations of society . . . He pointed out certain definite steps looking toward a Golden Age to come when emphasis would be placed upon good, honest work, beauty, simplicity, romance, fellowship, and equality for men.' (page 366)

The picture is complete—the beard trimmed, the Faraway look, the halo is so big that some might find it vulgar.

Let us examine the brushwork. It is clear that Mr. Grey is working in a tradition: or, rather, he employs the techniques of all his fore-

^a J. S. Middleton to Cosmo Rowe, April 4th, 1936.

runners. Mackail, Glasier, Shaw, Chesterton, May Morris—all are made use of as it suits him. But he is not without his own resources. He wishes to dissociate Morris's name from Marx for good and all, and no holds are barred. To begin with, two major wrenches are given to history. First, Marxists are described throughout as 'authoritarian', 'bureaucratic', doctrinaire believers in 'knife and fork' economic determinism, soulless scheming robots cut to the pattern ordered by the un-American Activities Committee. Since Morris was an historical materialist, and breathes fury in every page of his writings against bureaucracy and authoritarianism, Mr. Lloyd Eric Grey has a walk-over in this part of his argument. A sample of Mr. Grey's technique will be found on page 175 of his work, where the Marx versus Morris theme is first introduced with full solemnity. Here Mr. Grey takes it upon himself to present Morris's central arguments about the relations of the arts to society in the space of one and a half pages, making use of no quotations but giving as reference six important essays and one book written by Morris at various stages in the development of his ideas. Since Mr. Grey's capacity for presenting Morris's theory may be fairly compared with that of a very free translator engaged upon a work of literature he strongly dislikes in a language with which he is imperfectly acquainted, it is not surprising that he succeeds in turning Morris on his head, in totally confusing the reader and himself, and in emerging from the confusion with a proposition which flatly contradicts Morris's position:

'In brief, therefore, Morris believed that all historic progress and decay can be interpreted in terms of the interplay between art and society, artistic causes and effects taking precedence over all others.'

Mr. Grey may now press forward triumphantly:

'It is this philosophy of historic change which caused Morris to disagree at heart with the "economics" and "historical materialism" of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (just as a similar philosophy caused Benedetto Croce to disagree many years later) and to write to members of the Marxian Social Democratic Federation that any one who believes that "knife and fork" economics takes precedence over "art and cultivation . . . does not understand what art means". For art, to Morris, included economics, in so far as conditions governing the life and labour of a people were concerned.'

This paragraph might bear analysis as typical of Mr. Grey's style—the impressive but irrelevant parenthesis, the impressively meaningless concluding sentence, the knowledge arrogated of Morris's 'heart'

* 'Once again I warn you against supposing . . . that you will do any good by attempting to revivify art by dealing with its dead exterior.' (*The Aims of Art*); ' . . . the beginnings of Social Revolution must be the foundations of the rebuilding of the Art of the People.' (*Art and Socialism*); 'The first step towards the birth of art must be a definite rise in the conditions of the workers . . .' (*The Deeper Meaning of the Struggle*), etc.

produced in lieu of evidence, the epithet 'Marxian' pre-fixed to the S.D.F., the indiscriminate use of quotation marks—the last ones to indicate nine words of William Morris which Mr. Grey had pruned most carefully from an article, *How I Became a Socialist*, the earlier ones indicate, presumably, the same tones of aggrieved ridicule in which a B.B.C. announcer reads the latest Soviet peace proposals.

This, then, is Mr. Grey's first-line argument. Karl Mark believed in 'economics', and since William Morris was deeply concerned with art and believed in humanity, he must have been an enemy of Marx. Moreover, it appears that Marxist tactics are those of suicidal *must* elephants. When Morris is quoted as criticizing those who advocate 'spasmodic and desperate acts of violence', Mr. Grey comments (p. 318): 'a blow at Marxists and Anarchists'. The same assumption is evident (p. 255) when Mr. Grey dismisses in a paragraph the most important body of Morris's mature Socialist writings, his articles in *The Commonweal*, with the comment:

'The important thing is that Morris did not, in any of these writings, attempt to define Social Revolution in words other than those employed by him in "How We Live and How We Might Live" . . . in which he said "it does not necessarily mean a change accompanied by riot and all kinds of violence, and cannot mean a change made mechanically and in the teeth of opinion by a group of men who have somehow managed to seize on the executive power"—but rather it means "a change in the basis of society" that will make of individual and social needs a co-operative enterprise with the machinery both of industry and of government decentralized for the attainment of a happier, a more equitable and more beautiful world, with all development programmes based upon sound historical knowledge and healthy mental and physical programmes.'

The general reader is, of course, invited to slip directly from Morris's words into Mr. Grey's apologetics. I recommend him, at his next opportunity, to look at the essay and find out how Morris *does* define Socialism. Mr. Grey is quite entitled to have healthy views about development programmes and to express them in an impenetrable density of style: but it is not customary for a biographer to consistently denigrate the biographee by falsely attributing to him the intellectual processes of a Babbit.

The second major wrench to history is accomplished when Mr. Grey consistently describes Henry Mayer Hyndman as a Marxist, and the S.D.F. as a Marxist organization; and consequently presents Morris's break with the S.D.F. and formation of the Socialist League as a phase in Morris's struggle against Marxism. No attempt is made by Mr. Grey to assess the real issues in this difficult period. We are told at the outset of Hyndman that 'more than any other individual, he was to be the prophet in England of Marxian Communism'. (p. 195). Later we learn of him that he was:

'A seeming cross between a fanatical English Puritan and a Hebrew prophet, come alive out of an earlier day. One fixed idea had rooted

itself in his mind: Marx was his God and he, Hyndman, his prophet . . . ' (p. 217).

On the other hand we learn that:

'Morris's ideas were innately English; they had been conceived from the core of British history; they could appeal to the understanding of the common British citizen. Hyndman, on the other hand, wanted Marxism. All his efforts fostered a Socialist movement that was Continental rather than English in its origin' (p. 226).

Mr. Grey goes on to comment, with pained surprise:

'It is all the more noteworthy, therefore, that when the final split came, the Continental group as a whole followed Morris' (p. 226).

If Mr. Grey had wished to be honest with his readers, he would have found a great many other things about Morris's split with the S.D.F. and the formation of the Socialist League which are worthy of note. He would have commented on the fact that Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling were Morris's leading allies throughout the whole split, and that these two remained within the Socialist League until 1888, when anarchist influences were clearly triumphant. He would have noticed that E. Belfort Bax was another of Morris's closest associates, and that it was of an article by Bax (and not by Hyndman) that Marx wrote:

'Now this is the first English publication of the kind which is pervaded by a real enthusiasm for the new ideas and boldly stands up against British Philistinism' (Letter of Marx to Sorge, December 15th, 1881—the same letter in which Marx criticizes Hyndman and 'England for All.')

He would have drawn attention to the fact that in not one of his published papers does Morris criticize Hyndman because he 'wanted Marxism', but on the grounds that he is an opportunist 'politician', pushing a policy of 'adventure, show and advertisement', coquetting with jingoism', personally unscrupulous and dictatorial, and incapable of recognizing the limitations of the situation.¹⁰ And if Mr. Grey had wished to make the evidence available to his readers, he would have indicated the important letter of Engels to Bernstein (December 29th, 1884), in which Hyndman's rôle and the occasions for the split are described in terms almost identical with those of Morris, and from which it becomes clear not only that Engels heartily approves of the actions of the Avelings, Bax, and Morris, but that Morris personally

¹⁰ The most important documents are Morris's letters to Joynes and Carruthers (December 25th and 28th, 1884) printed on pages 587 to 595 of *William Morris, Artist, Writer, Socialist*, Vol. II, by May Morris, and his letter to Yewen and Thomson (January 1st, 1885) which Mr. Grey himself prints on pages 239 to 240.

consulted Engels during the course of the dispute." So much for Morris's 'rejection' of Marxism, and Mr. Grey's chapter-heading, 'Marxism is not enough . . .'

But Mr. Grey bases his whole argument upon this kind of suppression and subjective 'interpretation'. He follows Hyndman, Max Beer and other models in attributing all Marx and Engels's theoretical differences with Hyndman to personal pique on the part of Marx. Once the split has been 'interpreted' in terms of Morris's struggle against Marxism, Mr. Grey feels free for the remainder of the book to identify Hyndman with Marx and use him as an Aunt Sally. Since Morris's writings do not lend themselves to this interpretation, Mr. Grey feels free to suppress relevant passages and to rewrite them as he thinks Morris *ought* to have written. Where this is impossible, they are dismissed as:

' . . . certain stock phrases that were common to most Socialists of the time (in an endeavour to appeal to the working classes) . . . ' (p. 317):

or simply dismissed, as on page 321, where Morris and Bax's important *Socialism: It's Growth and Outcome*, in which the discussion of Socialist theory draws extensively upon Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and culminates in a thorough exposition of the first volume of *Capital* is treated in one paragraph by Mr. Grey. The greater part of this paragraph is given up to insinuations that Bax alone was responsible for the chapters on Marx, in spite of the following passage in the preface to the book:

'We have only further to add that the work has been in the true sense of the word a *collaboration*, each sentence having been carefully considered by both the authors in common . . . '

Mr. Grey is aided in his work not only by his enormous subjective powers of distortion (which lead him, for example, to 'assume' on page 269—against all the evidence—that the pugnacious Morris was

¹¹ In this letter Hyndman is described as 'a political adventurer and Parliamentary careerist'. Hyndman's intrigues and Morris's exposure of them are described in detail. In the week of the split 'Morris and Aveling were at my place before the session, and I was able to give them some further advice . . . A vote of censure on Hyndman was passed. Thereupon the majority resigned from the Federation . . . because the whole Federation was really nothing but a swindle (Engels's italics). Those who resigned were Aveling, Bax and Morris, the only honest men among the intellectuals—but men as unpractical (two poets and one philosopher) as you could possibly find. In addition, the better of the known workers'. That Morris is hardly likely to have resented Engels's description of him as 'unpractical' or as a 'Socialist by sentiment', is shown by many passages in his own writings, such as the following in a letter to Andreas Schœu: 'I feel myself weak as to the Science of Socialism on many points; I wish I knew German, as you see I must certainly learn it . . . I want statistics terribly: you see I am but a poet and artist, good for nothing but sentiment.' Also among Morris's letters to Schœu are four (December 17th, 18th (two), and 28th, 1884) describing in detail incidents which led to the split: the last of these describes an interview with Engels. These letters are now available in Mr. Henderson's *Letters of William Morris*.

secretly opposed to the nasty Trafalgar Square demonstration for free speech in 1887¹²), but by his profound and extensive ignorance both of Socialist theory and of the Labour movement in Britain. Tom Mann, for instance, 'deserves mention' (once) as a worker 'who fought repeatedly for less poverty and more free speech'. That is all we hear of him, and none of his reminiscences of Morris are permitted by Mr. Grey to intrude. However, at such moments when one's wrath is beginning to rise, Mr. Grey redeems the situation by a charming naïveté, as when he describes the Fabian Society as 'a group of social and ethical uplift workers'.

At a certain stage in the reading of this book, one is impelled to question not only Mr. Grey's scholarship and his mental equipment, but also his integrity. A few examples may be given, once again on the question of Morris and Marxism. On page 198 Mr. Grey gives us as a footnote, amongst other irrelevant matter, the information that Marx's 'proper Hebrew name was Mordechiah'. On page 200 the footnote is again employed. Engels writes in a letter to Sorge

¹² In view of the current ban on processions in London, and in the events of the last May Day, it is very much to the point to recall the events of this time and Morris's position. In November, 1887, the police imposed a ban on both processions and demonstrations in Trafalgar Square. On two successive Sundays, November 6th and 13th, battles were fought by the people to enter the Square, and on the second date ('Bloody Sunday') a worker, Linnell, was killed, for whose funeral procession Morris wrote his famous 'Death Song'. This is *The Times* account of the first day. The correspondent describes the forming-up of the Clerkenwell contingent:

'Among those in the cart were Mr. William Morris and Mrs. Besant, both of whom delivered speeches of a determined character. Mr. William Morris . . . proceeded to say that wherever free speech was attempted to be put down, it was their bounden duty to resist the attempt by every means in their power. He thought their business was to get to the Square by some means or other, and he intended to do his best to get there, whatever the consequences might be. They must press to the square like orderly people and good citizens. When the procession reached the Bloomsbury end of St. Martin's Lane, the police began to disperse it. So far the people had gone quietly and rather exultantly on their way towards Trafalgar Square: but at this point matters took a serious turn. The police, mounted and on foot, charged in among the people, striking indiscriminately in all directions, and causing complete disorder in the ranks of the processionists. I witnessed several cases of injury to men who had been struck on the head and face by the police. The blood, in most instances, was flowing freely, and the spectacle was indeed a sickening one. The struggle at this point did not last long; here and there men attempted to rally and face the police; but the unrestricted use which the police made of their batons overcame all resistance, and in a short time the bands were dispersed and the police had captured the remnants of the banners, which were torn and destroyed, and carried them off as trophies of the encounter. The action of the police in this struggle was received with yells of execration, and with groaning and hooting from the mob.'

Morris put himself at the head of several charges against the police ranks. He wrote in the next number of *Commonweal*: 'Our comrades fought valiantly, but they had not learned how to stand and turn their columns into a line, or to march on to the front. Those in the front turned and faced the rear, not to run away, but to join in the fray if opportunity served . . . I could see that numbers were of no avail unless led by a band of men acting in concert, and each knowing his own part.'

(April 29th, 1889) that Morris, a '*Gemütssozialist*', is 'in the hands of the anarchists' in the Socialist League, although he expresses the confidence in a letter written two weeks later to Liebknecht that he will 'get out of it somehow'. Mr. Grey quotes eight words of the former letter in a seriously confused context, and adds the comment:

'It is a bit difficult to translate *Gemütssozialist* as a "humanitarian Socialist" in view of Morris's well-known opinion of "philanthropic humanitarianism". In typically crude German slang, Marx and Engels looked upon Morris—or upon what little they knew of him—as a kind of "butter and egg man" who acted as "angel" for the Radicals.'

Marx was dead before Morris was established as a serious Socialist. Morris had little to do with 'the Radicals'. Engels at no time and in no language describes Morris as a 'butter and egg man' nor even as a 'sugar daddy'. No amount of reference to Morris's dislike of hypocritical philanthropy can alter Engels's good-natured description of him as *Gemütssozialist*, which still means a 'humanitarian Socialist' or a 'Socialist by sentiment'. On page 206 Mr. Grey is forced to note that Morris, on becoming a Socialist, read *Capital*, and he includes it among a list of other books. But the blow must be softened, and the footnote is once more brought into use:

'Marx's *Capital* . . . and Fitzgerald's translation of *Omar Khayam* were greatly admired by Morris during the winter of 1882-3, according to May Morris' (II, 76, ff.).

The reader who is mean enough to follow up this reference will find that May Morris does, indeed, refer to her father's study of *Capital*, but will be rewarded with no enlightenment whatsoever in that part of the text as to Morris's acquaintance with *Omar Khayam*. On page 229 Mr. Grey again refers to *Capital*, and this time he blossoms suddenly into quotation marks:

'The S.D.F., as built by Hyndman, had evolved its creed, its tactics and its chief character from *Das Kapital*: "abstrusely theoretical, bitterly class-conscious, international, intolerant of compromise or partial reform, and apparently anti-Christian."'

But this time no reference is given. We are not told whether this is a passage from Hyndman, Lord Godfrey Elton, or one of the lesser works of Mr. Lloyd Eric Grey. But since there are passages shortly before and after this quoted from Morris, the unwary reader is clearly invited to mistake this for Morris's own opinion.

Mr. Grey's employment of quotations is worthy of further comment. It should not be necessary to remark that the general reader has no time to verify every quotation that he is given, and that therefore there rests upon a biographer a great responsibility for extreme accuracy and honesty. It is legitimate for a biographer to select certain passages for quotation which illustrate aptly a line of argument: but it is his duty when doing so to suppress no passages which might materially affect the argument pursued. It is his duty to indicate

clearly when any passages have been omitted, and it is customary to close and reopen quotation marks when such omitted passages extend beyond the paragraph. Where an abstract is written by the biographer in place of quotation, it is his clear responsibility to keep as closely as possible to the terms and essential arguments of the original.

It is embarrassing to have to state these elementary principles of scholarship. But Mr. Grey (and how many others to-day?) observes no such obligations when he is presenting ideas with which he is out of sympathy. And he is out of sympathy with all Morris's central ideas. From the page of notes before me, I can select only a few examples. On occasion he will take a whole article, wrest half a dozen sentences from it out of widely differing contexts, and string them together (usually, but not always, with the omissions indicated by dots) as though he were presenting the line of Morris's argument. He performs this curious surgical operation of face-lifting upon Morris's important farewell contribution to the *Commonweal*, 'Where Are We Now?' (p. 304). In this article Morris assesses both the failures and the achievements of the past seven years of Socialist activity in Britain. Mr. Grey wishes to present Morris as a disillusioned man, and consequently is embarrassed by any reference to past achievements and hopes for the future. His 'quotation' begins characteristically:

'To some among us [he wrote] the past few years have seemed many and long, and crowded with disappointments. For what was it that we set out to accomplish?'

But Morris's words read as follows:

'To some the time will seem long, so many hopes and disappointments as have been crowded into them. Yet in the history of a serious movement seven years is a short time enough; and few movements surely have made so much progress during this short time in one way or another as Socialism has done. For what was it we set out to accomplish?' (May Morris, p. 512).

Mr. Grey continues with six or seven more sentences or parts of sentences from the article, connected with dots. These dots indicate omissions varying in length from five and a half paragraphs to the seven words *italicized* in the passage below:

'When I first joined the movement I hoped that some working-man leader, or rather (Mr. Grey: "*perhaps*") leaders, would turn up, who would push aside all middle-class help, and become great historical figures. I might still hope for that, if it seemed likely to happen *for indeed I long for it enough*; but to speak plainly, it does not so seem at present.'

It will be seen that Mr. Grey, here as elsewhere, omits, without even the plea of the saving of space, a material qualification of Morris's argument. Morris goes on to criticize Fabianism and reformism, in a passage opening:

'Our very success has dimmed the great ideals that first led us on; for the hope of the partial and, so to say, vulgarized realization of Socialism is now pressing upon us.'

Mr. Grey's version reads:

'But our very success has dimmed the great ideals (and we have fallen into political methods and subterfuges).'

(It is one of Mr. Grey's more amiable theories that, since Morris was a critic for a period of Parliamentary action and abhorred bourgeois 'politics', he eschewed all 'political methods'. It must be stressed that all the above passages are presented as quotation and not a précis; although at this point Mr. Grey abandons all pretence of quoting Morris and plunges into a précis which completes the travesty of Morris's position.

It would be tedious to examine Mr. Grey's technique any further with some detail, but several further references will indicate the variations possible upon this general pattern. Mr. Grey has discovered that by inserting his own comments in square brackets into the middle of a quotation from Morris he can turn the meaning on its head, e.g.: 'I will begin [he says] by saying that I call myself a *Communist*, and I have no wish to qualify that word by joining any other [such as Marxian, or Anarchistic] to it.' (p. 282).

In this way, on this and the following pages, he can present Morris's important theoretical struggle against the Anarchists in the pages of *The Commonweal* as showing 'how his Socialism differed from Marxian Communism'. These writings, which deal with the withering away of the State and full Communism, and which anticipate certain of the points developed from 'The Critique of the Gotha Programme', by Lenin in *State and Revolution*, are contorted unrecognizably. Mr. Grey wanders in and out of quotation marks, précis, and commentary, until at the top of page 285, he appears to be interchanging all three indiscriminately. It is significant that confusions and omissions always occur at key points in Morris's arguments, especially when he is treating the nature of the capitalistic State or the class-struggle (pp. 283, 284, etc.). The lengths to which Mr. Grey will go to avoid these passages are absurd. Such words as 'robotization' and 'monopolization' are used to obscure the perfectly clear terms employed by Morris. Thus passage after passage is rendered by Mr. Grey into sentimental American journalese, and the vigorous *Statement of Principles* of the Hammer-smith Socialist Society is reduced (pp. 317-9) to pious mumbo-jumbo.

In brief, it is difficult to point to a single technique of dishonest scholarship, downright distortion or sharp practice which could not be illustrated from Mr. Grey's text. Unsupported assertions are strewn about wholesale ('Class struggle was abhorrent to Morris', p. 254). The current insinuations of the 'cold war' are there (Morris, the admirer of Icelandic saga and Indian art, held 'a strong aversion to

all Eastern influences . . .’ and a ‘preference for Western, or European culture’, p. 322, etc.) The concluding two chapters, from which I have already quoted extensively, and in which Mr. Grey’s final assessment of Morris is made, are ridiculous, pretentious, and pathetic by turns, and dishonest throughout. One is left speculating upon the motives of an author who has spent so much labour (for the paste-and-scissors work alone must have occupied many weeks) in so derogating the memory of a great man: and upon those of the publisher’s readers who recommended the book’s publication.

In that watchdog of scholarship standards, *The Times Literary Supplement*, we find severe reservations at the conclusion of an urbane and uniformly favourable review:

‘Mr. Grey, it should be repeated, leaves nothing material unnoticed . . . He has perceived Morris’s rare and splendid wholeness. But he does not give it supremacy. The final understanding seems missing. It may be absurd to note such peculiarities of detail as “Lord Godfrey Elton” and the description of Marlborough as “Church School”, meaning that its founders, and its tone when Morris went there, were “High Church”. These oddities add something to the sense of flavour wanting; English salt, not Attic. Morris, who has been called the Last Socialist, may one day be called by modern defeatism the Last Englishman. And in that, with all that it implies of depth and breadth, is the core of his wholeness.’ (October 14th, 1949.)

One can suppose that this reviewer is employed more for his knowledge of etiquette than for any concern with the canons of scholarship. On one point only can one agree with the reviewer. Mr. Grey has no ‘final understanding’ of Morris’s ‘wholeness’, because he cannot or does not wish to notice the integrating factor which bound together all Morris’s mature thought and activities—Marxism, with all that it implies of depth and breadth. There lies the core of his wholeness, and it is this which makes him, not the Last Englishman nor the Last Socialist, but one of the first great modern forerunners of the British Communist Party.

IV

‘Mr. Grey . . . leaves nothing material unnoticed.’ Mr. Grey, in his own voluminous bibliography, has occasion to note of one work that it is ‘One of the most pretentious and least accurate studies ever made under the guise of scholarly procedure’, and of another that it is: ‘not only unsound at the core, but illustrates almost every vice of superficial scholarship.’ Admirers of William Morris may, perhaps, feel that we are burying his vigorous uncompromising personality under a monstrous mountain of pettifogging niceties. or that Mr. Grey, in spite of the ‘definitive’ pretensions of his book, may be dismissed as one more charlatan or freak or worse. But we are not at all concerned with Mr. Grey’s motives or personal character. We are concerned with a more serious matter altogether—the disintegration of the elementary standards of bourgeois scholarship, of which the

writing, publication, and virtually uncontested reception of this book provides a striking, but not exceptional, illustration. This degeneration is not, of course, most apparent in the handling of Etruscan architecture or even Elizabethan playbooks. It shows its most acute symptoms precisely at those points where an accurate presentation of text or sequence of events will most undermine the positions of bourgeois ideology. The reception of Mr. Grey's book cannot even be explained away as an *oversight*. It is simply that those methods of investigation demanded in less controversial fields are no longer regarded as necessary—indeed, are held to be actively undesirable—in any discussion of Marxist thought or Communist policy or the Soviet Union. Nor, again, can we understand this if we regard it as an open and fully conscious conspiracy of distortion. The bourgeois, true to his character, is busy evolving a theory in self-justification, in which 'moral' judgements must take priority and govern scientific methods of study. Hence the attacks levelled against the Webbs' *Soviet Communism*. Hence a recent review in the *Manchester Guardian* by Mr. A. J. P. Taylor, of Professor E. H. Carr's *Studies in Revolution*, which is so explicit that it is worth quoting at length:

'Professor Carr is deeply committed to the proposition that Marxism, both in theory and practice, is a rational activity, to be comprehended by the cool exercise of the reason. His new collection of essays demonstrates afresh the advantages, and the defects, of Mr. Carr's philosophic approach. He can discuss revolutionary doctrines, whether of Marx, St. Simon, or Sorel, without finding them absurd; he can sketch revolutionary history, whether in Russia or Germany, without hostility. It is not that he is sympathetic to revolution; he is aloof from revolution, and his book is a striking proof that impartiality is the worst of all forms of partiality . . .'

The review continues:

'Mr. Carr's rational approach is shown in his judgements on Communist policy . . . There is no moral condemnation of Communism; and no suggestion that the failure of Communism may be to the moral revolt of mankind, not to blunders in tactics. For Mr. Carr tolerance, love, human decency do not count in politics; all that matters is reason and force.

"To write about evil with detachment is to be on the side of evil".'

Impartiality towards the Soviet Union is partiality. The first requirement of the student of Communism, we learn, is not a rational approach or objectivity or scholarship, but righteous moral indignation.

It is, therefore, no accident that Mr. Grey's book should illustrate this sharp decline. Where revolutionary history cannot be forgotten it must be rewritten. A 'Socialist' Minister of Labour is sent to the microphones to try to break a dockers' strike—and invokes the names of Ben Tillett and Tom Mann! Mr. Morgan Phillips addresses an international conference of 'Socialists' and finds the roots of British

Socialism, not in Marxism but in Methodism! And William Morris, since he cannot be forgotten at all, is coming to occupy an increasingly important place in these 'revisions'. In 1934 Mr. R. Page Arnot wrote:

'In essence the fight over the body of Morris was a fight against the influence of Marx inside the Labour movement.'

With every day that passes this fight is conducted more bitterly. The betrayers of Socialism to-day find in Morris an unpractical 'visionary', who lifted 'men's eyes to the skies',¹³ whose criticism of society was moral' as opposed to 'economic'.¹⁴ The more cautious or less unscrupulous among them may admit that what Morris saw in the skies was not *exactly* a vision of Mr. Attlee shaking hands with Mr. Truman or Mr. Strachey stalking the jungles of Malaya:

'He never was a practical politician. He knew little of economics—why should he? He was wrong in his assessment of the course of events and mistaken in his judgement of the way in which Socialism would come in the British context.'

But they do not inquire any further into the exact nature of Morris's 'vision' or the source of his moral anger. So long as his outlook is labelled 'moral', he is no further defined, every contortionist and charlatan can claim to be his heir. And in place of William Morris in his blue serge and with his craftsman's hands, patiently explaining the class struggle to a group of half a dozen in the deserted Sunday street, we find Mr. Attlee, in the ceremonial uniform of the capitalist class, explaining at a banquet of the Royal Academy¹⁵—that the Labour Party 'owes more' to Morris than to Marx.

Of course, the swindle upon the workers of Britain, of which Mr. Attlee was at the moment serving as so apt a symbol, owes nothing

¹³ *Fifty Years' March: The Rise of the Labour Party*, by Francis Williams, p. 53.

¹⁴ Of course, Morris's criticism of society was moral, but its depth and validity sprang from his understanding of society, Marxism. With Morris, moral weight and scientific analysis were complementary and inseparable.

¹⁵ 'To a Socialist hoping for speedy changes in the basis of society, a visit to our picture exhibitions is not altogether lacking in encouragement, though to a serious artist who has not conceived hopes of revolution, it would surely be most discouraging: for here also are signs of that coming bankruptcy of our present society, tokens of which are forced upon us so plentifully from the economic and political side of things; it is with a certain exultation that one walks through the wild jumble of insanity that clothes the walls of the Royal Academy to-day, when one thinks that the dominant class . . . who have deprived the people of art in their daily lives, can get for themselves nothing better than this for the satisfaction of their intellectual craving for beauty. Two or three men of genius, mostly outside the Academy, and a few of talent, half of whom also seldom if ever exhibit there, this handful is all that can show any attempt at the highest form of intellectual art which does not deserve the contempt of all serious and honest lovers of beauty; and all the time the golden shower rains down fast from the centres of profit-mongering on the army of incapables who make up the rest of the painters of pictures.' *Justice*, May 24th, 1884.

to either of these great men. But the workers cannot be blamed if they do not know the real William Morris: or if the more revolutionary among them are tempted even to regard his memory with suspicion. For behind the apologetics of Morgan Phillips and Morrison, the small-talk of Attlee, the anecdotal journalism of Frances Williams, there can be found the patient work of fifty years' interpretative 'scholarship'. The lush, evil-smelling lies flourish above the surface, but nourishing them is the network of scholarly insinuations and omissions, of careful editing and collusive reviewing, of footnotes and punctuation. However much we lop the stems, they will grow again, unless we fetch up and burn these roots. It is a dirty business grubbing after them, but as every gardener knows, it has to be done.

[Note: This article was written nearly a year ago, and was intended to clear the ground for a more extensive attempt at a positive assessment of Morris's theory and practice as a Socialist, upon which I am still engaged. But the important thing is not my, or anyone else's, interpretation: it is that more and more readers should return to Morris's own neglected writings, especially those in May Morris's two supplementary volumes to the Complete Works, so that they can find out the truth of the matter for themselves.

Since this was written, Mr. Philip Henderson has joined the small but honourable company (Professor Cole, May Morris, the late Holbrook Jackson, and—with reservation—Mackail) who are more concerned with presenting Morris's own writings to the public than their own 'interpretations' of them. Mr. Henderson's *Letters of William Morris* (Longmans, 25s.) makes available to the public many extremely interesting letters, among them those to the Rev. George Bainton and to Andreas Scheu. It is all the more to be regretted that Mr. Henderson's 'Introduction' falls very far short of a serious understanding of Morris, and in particular of the last (Socialist) years of his life. Mr. Henderson's dislike of 'the military Communism of our time' leads him to remark that 'it comes as a surprise to find that many of his letters . . . are pure Marxism'. Mr. Henderson is scrupulous with his facts: but it is evident that he is never able to overcome this 'surprise' and is thus incapacitated from entering sympathetically into Morris's mind. For example, he declares (p. liv): 'Morris . . . judged any society mainly by how it affected the creative work of artists and literary men,' and quotes as conclusive evidence (while ignoring several hundred statements to the contrary) Morris's letter to C. E. Maurice (July 1st, 1883):

' . . . in looking into matters social and political, I have but one rule, that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, "How could you bear it yourself? What would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live?" I have always been uneasy when I had had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often that it is seldom out of my mind: and the answer to it has made me more and more ashamed of my position . . . Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me.'

It is clear from this that Mr. Henderson has quite misunderstood what Morris was saying: Morris is writing, not from the position of an artist, but from elementary human fellow-feeling. At many other points Mr. Henderson misunderstands or evades the essential issues: he makes use of a puerile passage from Hyndman to blur the issues upon which the Socialist League split off from the S.D.F., and of quotations from Blunt's *Diaries*

to give a false impression that Morris was disillusioned with Socialism in the last years of his life. But, however regrettable it is that Mr. Henderson should have added to rather than lessened the confusions surrounding Morris, I wish to make it clear that my disagreements with him are upon matters of presentation and interpretation rather than of fact, and are therefore of a quite different order from my disagreements with Mr. Lloyd Eric Grey.

Space does not permit of a discussion of the many references to William Morris in print, speeches and on the B.B.C. during the past year. It is sufficient to note that he has now been granted Cabinet rank, and his name is used in contexts which suggest that (through the medium of table rapping?) he has given his benevolent assent to the slaughter of Korean villagers with jellied petrol bombs, the imprisonment of strike leaders, and the rehabilitation of Nazi leaders, if not, perhaps, as yet, to the use of the atomic bomb. Readers are advised, when they next see a public reference to Morris, to handle it with long forceps and place it in a bucket of disinfectant before they scrutinize it more closely.—E.P.T.]

D. G. Bridson

WRECKER'S YARD

Brittle bits in the boneyard of usefulness,
The skulls and scraps,
Waiting a second entry through process
To purpose, perhaps . . .

Dead roots in the ploughed field of effort,
Straw from the threshing,
Seeking a new toe-hold in the quickening earth
And sap's refreshing . . .

Dry sea-wrack sitting upon a sad shore,
The done with and cast aside,
All that's left after the accident,
Shoes of the suicide . . .

O put fire to kindling upon the firebrick—
Let the bright furnace
Boil back this refuse into the life-cycle
Of happy harness! . . .

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (II)

IF *Memory* is the key-process in Wordsworth's scheme, *Hope* is that in Coleridge's. His incessant use of the Hope-motive makes it necessary to glance at this aspect of his work, the centre round which almost all his struggles go on.

First, *Hope and light-effects*. One of his very earliest poems is the *Sonnet to the Autumnal Moon*. The Moon, 'mother of wildly-working visions', is equated with Hope, 'as changeful and as fair, seen dimly, lost, emerging in radiant might'. In the *Sonnet to the Evening Star* (?1790), Fancy desires to stay for ever in communion with the evening-star, and Hope is with her. In *Lines on an Autumnal Evening*, Spring leaps from Hope's bower, and a long picture is drawn of youthful wanderings with love and poetry in romantic scenes of nature, 'Scenes of my Hope', which are identified with the 'bright hues that paint the clouds of eve', though their cheat is merged in turn with 'the moonless night'.²⁰ In *The Gentle Look*, joys glimmer 'in Hope's twilight ray', while in *Lines to a Beautiful Spring* we meet 'the morning sun of Hope'.

Hope is much associated with Youth and Childhood. Aglow 'as the dear hopes, that swell the mother's breasts'. *The Pang more Sharp than All* tells the loss of 'Hope's last and dearest child without a name'.

Hope keeping Love, Love Hope alive,
Like Babes bewildered in a snow . . .

(*Improvisatore*).

In Youth 'Life went a-maying, with Nature, Hope and Poesy', he tells us in the poem he wrote after that buzz which threw him back on the Quantock Dawn. Patience, Love and Hope are the basis of Education.

O part them never! If Hope prostrate lie,
Love too will sink and die.

But Love is subtle, and doth proof derive,
From her own like that Hope is yet alive . . .

Thus Love repays to Hope what Hope first gave to Love.²¹

Hope opens up the prospect:

Obedient now to Hope's command,
I bid each humble wish expand,

²⁰ Compare the associations of Hope's 'favourite theme' in *Happiness*.

²¹ In *Ode on the Departing Year*, Hope fixes on the babe 'her wishful gaze'. News of his sister's near death was 'Infant Hope destroy'd by early frost', and Cherub Hope comes in the lines on Mrs. Robinson's death. *On quitting School* has Hope telling of future joys. See *To Fortune for the Flower of Hope*; also the *Chatterton Monody*, and *On Observing a Blossom on the First of Feb., 1796*. 'Fairy Hope' in the *Tea-Kettle Monody*.

And fair and bright Life's prospects seem,
While Hope displays her cheering beam,
And Fancy's vivid colourings stream. . . .
(*Happiness*).

A fragment of 1810(?) sees life as 'a flight of Hope for ever on the wing' which in its coiling wheel fans 'the calm air upon the brow of Toil'. *Work without Hope* of 1827 ends:

Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

The Visionary Hope sees Hope as the one force keeping a man alive amid torments and anxieties:

That Hope, which was his inward bliss and boast,
Which waned and died, yet ever near him stood,
Though change in nature, wander where he would—
For Love's Despair is but Hope's pining Ghost!
For this one hope he makes his hourly moan,
He wishes and can wish for this alone. . . .²²

The Hope-motive is entwined with his political outlook. Like the dawn-image it bursts out through his sense of unity with the French Revolution. The early poem on the Bastille sees pre-revolutionary France as a land uncheered by the 'gleam of Hope'. He acclaims Erskine for his fight against the government-repression:

When British Freedom for a happier land
Spread her broad wings, that fluttered with afright,
Erskine! thy voice she heard, and paused her flight.
Sublime of hope! For dreadless thou didst stand. . . .

When Kosciusko falls, he hears 'the dirge of murder'd Hope'. And there is certainly in this sonnet a germinal point of Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*. Campbell has, 'And Freedom shieked as Kosciusko fell', and Coleridge opens:

O what a loud and fearful shriek was there,
As though a thousand souls one death-groan pour'd! . . .
Fallen Kosciusko.

Later in *On Observing a Blossom on the First of February, 1796*, he asks:

²² There is a series of love-hopes: see *On a late Connubial Rapture*; *On a Discovery made too late*; *To Two Sisters*; *To Mary Pridham*; frag. 76 ('I have experienced the worst'); *Kisses*, etc. Sara Hutchinson became his Hope: 'While I am talking of government, of war, or chemistry, there comes over my bodily eye some tree beneath which we have rested, some rock where,' high up 'those dear lips pressed my forehead . . . O Elpisomene' (i.e., Hope—the memory-flash of love becomes hope of the future).

Shall I compare thee to poor Poland's hope,
Bright flower of hope killed in the opening bud?

And in the poem written to Wordsworth on the night after hearing his recitation of the first draft of *The Prelude*, he writes how his friend was there, garlanded, when the Revolution broke:

When from the general heart of human kind,
Hope sprang forth like a full-blown Deity!
—Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning in his eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold,
The Angel of the Vision.

This passage attempts to state the check to Hope as the revolution developed all the contradictions of its bourgeois nature; the retreat into Idealism; the regathering of forces for a future out-movement from the tower. Meanwhile (he says) the image, as defined in such works as *The Prelude* which seek to clarify the processes of growth, stands glorious, stimulating afresh confidence and understanding for what is to happen 'far on'.

His own struggle, following the magnificent efforts to grapple with the political situation in *France*, *Religious Musings*, *The Destiny of Nations*, *Fears in Solitude*, and so on, lead to the split between Hope and Memory, Hope and Action, which in fact wrecked his life and creativeness.²³ *On Revisiting the Seashore* (1801) has the restorative Hope set beside Memory's 'silent adorations making a blessed shadow of the earth'. He still feels that the regeneration is personally possible; but in *Ode to Tranquillity* of the same year, Hope is idle and Memory is dire; he feels paralysed by 'the present works of present man—a wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile'. *Dejection* (written shortly before the deflection of the dawn-image into religious abstraction in the *Hymn before Sun-rise*) links Fancy, Hope and the 'shaping spirit of Imagination', and opposes them to 'Reality's dark dream' (1802). And *Constancy to an Ideal Object* abandons the solace of the future, 'the faery people of the future day'. For that future will only come after his day:

When, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death.

Yet he ends with a light-image of hope. As when on a wintry dawn the 'viewless snow-mist wreathes a glist'ning haze', the woodman:

Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head;

²³ *To the Rev. W. J. Hart* (?1795) still sees in Music Hope and Memory united happily—the 'shadowy throng' and the dawn-song.

The enamour'd rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

So hope, the onward-movement of the historical process, persists despite the failures and depressions of nations and individuals.

FINALLY, in the hope-series there is a set connected with *Sea and Wreck*. In the first version of the *Monody on the Death of Chatterton* (1790) the end conjures up Waves of Woe, but the sea-theme is not developed. In the later version, Coleridge, however, invites the ghost of Chatterton across the waters to his communistic Utopia. Fate has killed 'the last pale Hope that shivered at my heart', yet 'Hence, gloomy thought'!

O'er the ocean swell
Sublime of Hope I seek the cottaged dell
Where Virtue calm with careless step may stray;
And, dancing to the moon-light roundelay,
The wizard Passions weave a holy spell!

O Chatterton! that thou wert yet alive!
Sure thou would'st spread the canvas to the gale,
And love with us the tinkling team to drive
O'er peaceful Freedom's undivided dale;
And we, at sober eve, would round thee throng,
Hanging, enraptured, on thy stately song. . . .

Here we have a tangle of the image-clusters we have quested—Seclusion, unifying Passions, inspiring Moon and Eve; but they are all merged on the ocean-passage and the discovery of communist earth, the 'undivided dale' of Freedom.²⁴ Here is the goal of Hope.

The personal wreck appears in *The Sigh*. First 'the lovely Prospect' smiling; then the shipwreck 'on Life's stormy sea', then 'sickly Hope' waning. *To a Lady with Falconer's Shipwreck* (?1814):

And thou, the while thou canst not choose but shed
A tear for Falconer, wilt remember me.²⁵

One of the very earliest poems by Coleridge we have is *Dura Navis*, a poem of foreboding expressed in terms of the sea-storm, ending with the eve-metaphor, 'And gild with brightest rays the evening of thy Life' (1787). A most interesting point is that we meet here already the image of the sea-of-blood. (This is one of the basic images expressing horror of the imperial sea-expansions of what Blake calls 'the fiends of commerce' raging round Albion: it begins in Thomson's description of the wrecked slave-ship, and after a long

²⁴ 'Freedom's UNDIVIDED dell' (Coleridge's capitals) appears again in *To the Rev. W. J. Hart* as the home of Toil, Health, Love.

²⁵ Note the storm-ship seen, then gone in the next lightning-flash, *Lines at Shurton Bars*.

and involved sequence of sunset-blood-seas, expressive of Britain's guilt, culminates in Turner's great painting of yet another slave-ship wrecked bloodily in an eve-storm.)

Yet not the tempest, or the whirlwind's roar
Equals the horrors of Naval Fight,
When thundering Cannons spread a sea of Gore. . . .

In *Religious Musings*, after a vision of Love as the Angel in the Sun, comes the height-picture:²⁶

Haply for this some younger Angel now
Looks down on Human Nature; and behold!
A sea of blood bestrewed with wrecks, where mad
Embattling interests on each other rush.

Here the bloody sea has become class-society itself. And so in *The Destiny of Nations*, 'The Sun that rose on Freedom, rose in Blood'! And in *The Mad Monk* (1802) all Nature flows with the blood of guilt. The flowers have the colours of a murdered girl's blood, and the red flash of the storm makes bloody the falling stream. 'The sun torments me from his western bed.'²⁷

COLERIDGE gives us a daydream which oddly links with the moon-rock of Cowper's fascination. 'From my very childhood, I have been accustomed to abstract, and as it were, unrealize whatever of more than common interest my eyes dwelt on, and then by a sort of transfusion and transmission of my consciousness to identify myself with the object.' Then he adds that if he should ever again feel 'the genial warmth and stir of the poetic impulse', he would then transfuse himself into:

a rock, with its summit just raised above the surface of some bay or strait in the Arctic Sea . . . all round as fixed and firm . . . as my

²⁶ I have not dealt with prospect-images, but they abound as part of the light-effects and emotional expansion. Examples are *Lines composed while climbing . . . Brockley Coomb* (1795): here the height-solitude (elm-shadowed fields, and prospect-bounding sea) lead to the desire for companionship. *To a young friend on his proposing to domesticate with the Author*, 1796, which has an allegorising section on the Hill of Knowledge, and sets the prospect (which 'through the gazing eye pours all its healthful greenness on the soul') against the moneyed world. *Lines . . . at Elbinerode* (which sees distant England 'shaping in the steady clouds thy sands and high white cliffs'); *A Stranger Minstrel* on Skiddaw; the setting of *Fears in Solitude*, etc.

²⁷ *The Ode on the Departing Year*, after invoking the spirit-dance of mid-night ('in misty train'—each spirit 'with prophetic son' relating 'some tyrant-murderer's fate'), he sees a Vision of 1796 where 'before the cloudy throne, aye Memory sits.' The Year has a robe 'inscribed with gore,' Coleridge in his Argument says, 'The second Epode prophesies, in anguish of spirit, the downfall of this country.'

own substance, and near me lofty masses . . . in such wild play with meteoric lights, or with the quiet shine from above."²⁸

This play on lights would make the place 'a place of healing to lie' in. The movement of waters is ice-fixed, but the lights keep on with their gay playing. The present stormy insecurity is ended, and life transferred to a higher level.

Arctic light-effects played a considerable part in Coleridge's imagery. One important derivation is from Darwin's description of the Aurora Borealis: 'The wan stars glimmering through the silver train.' But the northern lights came into 18th century verse before Darwin; the interest in scenes of Lapland and Greenland go back to Thomson, and earlier. And the play of lights in the sky links with the Ossianic spirits through whom the stars glimmer."²⁹

All these elements went into *The Ancient Mariner*, as well as accounts of tropical light-effects from books of discovery and poems like Falconer's *Shipwreck*, e.g. the sparkling dolphins.

In 1798 in Somerset, Wordsworth and Coleridge started on an imitation of Gessner's prose-poem, *The Death of Abel*. This work was to be *The Wanderings of Cain*. They finally laughed at the effort, 'and the *Ancient Mariner* was written instead,' says Coleridge. The opening shows the romantic setting, in the full vein of the Gothic novel:

Midnight on the Euphrates. Cedars, palms, pines. Cain discovered sitting on the upper part of the ragged rock, where is the cavern overlooking the Euphrates, the moon rising on the horizon. His soliloquy.

It might be a stage-setting in one of the tragedies of the period. The work was a failure; but its interest lies in the two poets turning to Gessner, whose prose-poem was linked in its European effects with Ossian, and in the relation to *The Ancient Mariner*. Clearly there is no connection in the details or apparatus of the prose-poem and the poem; but the theme of blood-guilt, cursed wanderings, and expiation is the same in both.

Cain thus provides the link with Ossian and the Gothic novel.

Both Cain and the Mariner are the Poet, the Prophet, Scapegoat, who bears the sins of the world and leads the way into regeneration. Coleridge brings this point out in the little poem about the lovely boy plucking fruit that he himself related to *Cain*. In a note to the Conclusion of *Aids to Reflection*, he cites the verses with the preface:

We will return to the harmless species—the enthusiastic Mystes. . . . Let us imagine a poor Pilgrim benighted in a wilderness or desert, and

²⁸ *Biog. Epistolaris*, 1911, ii, 153f. It would be an interesting side-track of our general enquiry to go into the uses of the meteor in 18th c. poetry.

²⁹ Lowes, 94ff, 189, etc. Lowes sees the Darwin influence, but misses Ossian. Among the voyages were F. Martens, *Voyage into Spitzbergen and Greenland*, 1694, and *The Strange and Dangerous Voyages of Captain Thomas James*, 1633.

pursuing his way in the starless dark with a lanthorn in his hand. Chance or his happy genius leads him to an Oasis or natural Garden, such as in the creations of my youthful fancy I supposed Enos the Child of Cain to have found. (1825, p. 383.)

In a doubling of motives, the benighted Pilgrim appears in the poem also as the one 'that on a lonesome road doth walk in fear and dread' with a fiend behind him. Here again is a link with Ossian, where we meet such phrases as: 'When the world is silent and dark, and the traveller sees some ghost sporting in his beam,' or 'He rose like the beam of morning, on a haunted heath: the traveller looks back, with bending eye, on the field of dreadful forms.' The lost traveller in the evening or the midnight ruin is common in 18th century verse, but Macpherson probably had in mind a poem on Culloden by G. Masters (1747):

As when a swain belated on his way
Sees as he fancies through the close of day
A ghostly spectre—struck with pale afright
He measures back the ground in hasty flight,
Whilst his own shadow by reflections clear
Of silver Luna seen augments his fear.
At every breeze, each rustling of the wind,
Startled he stops, yet dreads to look behind:
Still he believes the phantom at his heels
And his cold touch imaginary feels.⁴⁰

The ghosts of the slaughtered clans haunt this eve.

The structure of the *Mariner*, it has been demonstrated, is that of John Newton's evangelic *Narrative*, which strongly affected Cowper with its tale of the sinning sailor, the disaster which seems linked with his sin, the breaking of the stony heart, the welling-up of a new life, the attaining of the harbour of hope. Coleridge takes this structure, carries over its deep human significance, but breaks the narrow evangelic interpretation. He universalises Newton's experience, and deepens it by drawing into its orbit a mass of the most vital imagery of the poetry of the day—imagery drawn from the struggle to master nature, which the discovery-voyages and the scientific experiments expressed.⁴¹

The direct stimulus was a dream by a friend, Cruickshank, of a spectre-bark manned by a crew of ghosts. Wordsworth suggested that the Old Navigator ('as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him') should commit some crime to bring on himself 'the spectral persecution'.

⁴⁰ Lowes, 526, 604, misses Ossian. Coleridge refers to Dante, *Inferno*, xxi, 25ff, but the Highlands dusk was certainly in his thoughts.

⁴¹ For Wordsworth's use of Newton in *The Prelude* (vi): Martin, 38, and Havens, 413.

I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, a day or two before that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Seas, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime?'

And later he pointed out an actual light-effect seen from the Valley of Rocks, Lynton, which was like an illustration to the deathship that appears in the poem:

The bare masts of a vessel on the very edge of the horizon and within the red-orbed disk of the setting sun, like his own spectre-ship.

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange thing drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the sun.

Here is the sunset-ship in its most obvious menace. The advent of a death-ship in the sunset-light is common in folk-tradition. 'In the majority of these accounts the fantastic ship appears a little before the setting of the sun.' Thus, the death-ship seen at New Haven, Connecticut, in June, 1647, came 'about an Hour before Sun-set'.³²

All these folk-elements lie behind the imagery of the *Mariner*; but if we turn to Coleridge's own poems, we find part of the source in his own sensibility. Just before the *Mariner*, when Charles Lamb had been coming down to stay in Somerset with him, Coleridge had his leg hurt and could not go walking with his friend. In *This Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, he imagines Lamb out on a walk in the evening as he writes; imagines him climb into a wide prospect and watch the sun go down, while his beams make the heath flowers burn richer purple, and the distant hills 'live in the yellow light'. Then he tells how he himself confined in the lime-tree bower has watched the changing lights and shadows among the leaves right into the twilight. He says that he is glad to be cut off from Lamb's enjoyments for once, as the loss makes him feel their goodness all the more. Then comes the passage:

My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blest it! reeling, its black wing

³² H. Gaidoz, *Mélusine*, ii, 164; Wordsworth, *Works*, xii, 272f; Lowes, 162f, 202, 276. Hone (*Everyday Book*, ii (1827), 1556) has, from the *New Monthly Mag.*, a poem *The Untombed Mariners. An incident really witnessed in the Bay of Biscay*. At midnight they see the Ship with 'the skeletons of men long blanch'd and marrowless there'.

(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had cross'd the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
Flew creaking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

Here we have the black shape of ill-omen flying across the sunset, into the very blaze of the sun. But it fails to do any harm, because of the love that Charles has for all living things. 'All that lives is holy,' in Blake's sense. Charles's love that robs the sunset-rook of evil is the Mariner's welling of love for the sea-creatures, that breaks the curse of the sunset-ship.

The Ancient Mariner, from one aspect, thus turns out to be Charles Lamb! Not that the curse is in his soul. The poem says that the evil from which Charles has been liberated is London, where Charles has gone on so many years struggling along:

With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity.

And his wandering is the free movement into Nature. 'Yes! they wander on in gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad.' There is further the point that the 'calamity' of evil environing Charles is not only the fact that he is 'in the great City pent', but is also the madness of his sister, who had killed her mother the previous year. If we read Lamb's letters of 1796-7 to Coleridge, we can understand why Coleridge feels his holiday as a liberation from weariness and horror. In Lamb's first extant letter to Coleridge, in May, 1796, he refers to his 'prison-house'; and in the next letter is a sonnet about rambling in the country away from the 'detested walls' of London and its 'selfish, sordid, money-getting kind'. In the same letter he mentions that his brother has had his leg badly injured, and the fifth letter mentions that his mother cannot use her limbs and Mary must sleep with her every night, 'confined' is his word. A few weeks later the murder occurs. Thus, Coleridge with his injured leg, laid up in the lime-prison, has abundant reasons for fellow-feeling with Lamb and the Lambs. But the crucial thing is the blood-guilt on the family, and Charles' power to exorcise it by the deep springs of love in his soul.²³

It is therefore true to say that from one angle the Mariner is Mary-and-Charles Lamb in a composite image; and the killed Albatross is

²³ We must remember that Lamb had been in a sort of paternal or elder brother relation to S.T.C. at Christ's Hospital; and that deep in the sunset-image of fear and hope is S.T.C.'s childhood experience when he tried to knife his elder brother Francis and ran out into the sunset at Ottery—and might well have died through his night's exposure in the harsh October weather, waking too stiff to move under a thornbush at the edge of the cliff over the Otter.

the murdered Mother, the Earth that streams with blood in *The Mad Monk*.⁴⁴

Both *The Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* are dream-poems: the first came from Cruickshanks' dream reinterpreted by Coleridge in terms of his own emotional situation (projected on to Charles Lamb) and developed in his characteristic imagery; the second came from his own dream and reveals his imagery in its most intense concentration of desire and yearning. *Cain*, *The Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, and these two poems all emerge from a single phase of poetic growth.

But further light is thrown on the inner meaning of *Kubla Khan* if we turn to *A Day-dream* (?1807). 'My eyes make pictures when they are shut'. This reverie-method of poetic association we have already discussed: it is typical in a general way of all the romantics, and is in fact of the very essence of the organising concepts of Solitude. Eve, Moonrise. But in Coleridge it reaches its English climax. Blake indeed shares the method to a considerable extent with him; the images that he projected on the edge of his consciousness as models of his art also leaped and hovered and changed into one another in his poems. 'I can look at a knot in a piece of wood,' he said, 'till I am frightened at it.' His mode of image-projection has close affinity with what are called hypnogogic images, the shapes that waver and bubble on the twilight edge of sleep. But in Coleridge this procedure is linked with the intense almost-scientific spirit of analytic inquiry that made him turn to the voyages and the papers on light-experiments. In the *Daydream*:

The shadows dance upon the wall
By the still dancing fireflames made
And now they slumber moveless all,
And now they make to me deep shade.

From this fluttering evanescent series of light-changes grows the image of shelter, 'I see a fountain large and fair, a willow and a ruined hut'. Then the girl becomes a bosoming enclosing willow herself. 'Bend o'er us like a bower, my beautiful green willow.'

There is an obviously close similarity between this daydream and the facts recounted in the *Lime-tree Bower my Prison*. There he is actually inside the bower, and watches the changing lights filtering through the leaves. An allied picture is one that he recounts in a letter:

I bent down to pick something from the ground . . . as I bent there came a distant vivid spectrum upon my eyes; it was one little picture—a rock, with birches and ferns on it, a cottage backed by it, and a

⁴⁴ The Rev. H. T. Cheever, in *The Island World* (in 1850) found in sailing round Cape Horn that 'a poor Peruvian, who is working his passage home, ascribed all our bad weather and high winds afterward to having killed the albatrosses; and he and the superstitious cook, in the height of the gale, prevailed upon a young passenger, who had taken one the day previous and was keeping it alive in the long boat, to let the noble bird go free,' 39f.

small stream. Were I a painter, I would give outward existence to this, but it will always live in my memory.

Similarly he says elsewhere, 'Laudanum gave me repose, not sleep; but you, I believe, know how divine that repose is, what a spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountain and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste of land.' This is the lovely oasis that the Child of Cain attains, the Eden Regained that marks the full lifting of the curse. In this sense *Kubla Khan* is the completion of the creative image kindled powerfully into *The Ancient Mariner*. It is complete and not a fragment. The accident of a caller distracting the poet did not snap the spell; the spell had gone as far as it could go when it set the poet in this garden of redemption.

This daydream dell, which had found its nearest earthly equivalent in the Alfoxden dell of the *Lime-tree Bower*, *The Nightingale* and *The Three Graves*, was to have been the theme of Coleridge's projected masterpiece, *The Brook*. 'I love to shut my eyes and bring up before my imagination that Arbour . . . Dear Arbour! An Elysium to which I have so often passed by your Cerberus and Tartarean tanpits.' *The Brook* was never written, for the same reason as *Kubla Khan* was not carried further. Coleridge, wishing to enter this Eden, is in fantasy Charles Lamb of the Lime-Tree Bower, liberated from the hell of London into the lovely opening prospect of Nature; but in fact he is the poet with the injured leg jailed in his daydream.

The inner conflict is revealed in a slip of the pen. He transcribed from Bartram's *Travels through N. and S. Carolina* (1791) a passage about 'some wilderness-plot, green and fountainous and unviolated by man'. And wrote, 'unviolated my man'. He himself intrudes uncontrollably on to the virgin plot, green and fountainous.

The obsessing image is closely related to that in a *Reverie* of Beckword's, written in December, 1778, 'being the full of the moon'. Here we are drawn through 'an infinity of irregular vales, all skirted with rocks and blooming with an aromatic vegetation' up to a hollow peak and a wide Cavern. Inside the Cavern the dreamer falls prostrate at the sacred source of the Nile issuing from a rock-gulf.³⁵

In *Kubla Khan* we have the meandering lines of mazy motion, the dark chasm where pants the fountain, the ominous caverns and the flower waters, with a centralising light-dome, 'a sunny pleasure-dome

³⁵ *Biog. Epist.*, i, 249. He saw these images, it seems, most easily when his eyes were inflamed: Lowes, 481; *Letters*, i, 240. See Lowes in general for the various travel-pictures including Bartram's; and for Alfoxden, 207f; as also T. Hutchinson, *Lyr. Ballads* (1920 ed.), 217. H. Sandford, i, 202.

On *Reverie*, see J. Grant (Mem. Manchester Soc., i, 1805) who describes it as the inability to control impression, and Coleridge himself in *A.P.*, 'My illustrations swallow my thesis. My brain fibres, or the spiritual light which abides in the brain-marrow, as visible light appears to do in sundry rotten mackerel and other *smashy* matters, is of too general an affinity with all things, and though it perceives the *difference* of things, yet it is eternally pursuing the likeness, or, rather, that which is common.'

with caves of ice'. The sense of liberation gained by the traversing of this sensuous and psychological landscape leads to the ecstatic inspiration-burst. The source of life, the source of the sacred river, has been found. He has fed on honeydew and drunk the milk of paradise—the virgin's milk of the alchemic dream of pure stability, pure transformation.

If we look at Mary Robinson's poem which records her impressions when she was shown the poem, we find that she has rearranged the elements of the scene to bring out more obviously the chiaroscuro, the entry into the light-dome of homecoming and release, and the relation of the motives of eve and dawn.

It is interesting also to glance at some of the many travel-scenes that are broken down into this skeletal but intense scheme of landscape-design that gives simultaneously the conviction of discovery and that of return-home, of wonder and recognition. In Berbier's *Voyage to Surat* we meet the canals flowing through green into a lake centralized by a dome-cabinet—and themselves ending in 'another great cabinet' of dome-shape. Rennell, in his *Memoir of a Map of Hindoostan*, tells of Cashmere encircled by a 'stupendous and romantic bulwark' through which the waters burst. And Mary Woolstonecraft in her *Letters . . . during a short Residence in Sweden, etc.*, 1796, describes a conflux of cataracts 'struggling with the huge masses of rock and rebounding from the profound cavities,' while 'a little island in the midst' divided the torrent and 'rendered it more picturesque; one part appearing to issue from a dark cavern, that fancy might easily imagine a vast fountain, throwing up its waters from the very centre of the earth'.

Again there is a passage in T. Maurice's *History of Hindoostan*, 1795, which Coleridge jotted down thus in his notebook:

Hymns Moon In a cave in the Mountains of Cashmere an Image of Ice which makes its appearance thus—two days before the new moon there appears a bubble of Ice which increases in size every day till the 15th day, at which it is an ell or more in height, then as the moon decreases, the Image does also till it vanishes.

We do not need the introductory phase or the italics to tell us that here is the conscious identification of ice-dome and moon.⁸⁶

And again in Maurice's book, linked with this account, he read of fountains 'sacred to the moon', and of the Nile, 'that sacred river' of Isis of the Moon. Here we link once more with Beckford's *Reverie*, but also with Darwin's verse, for which Blake engraved Fuseli's design of the Nile-Source, the Fertilisation of Egypt. The engraving shows Anubis with back turned and head thrown up, staring up at

⁸⁶ Lowes, 590, 384, 29, 382, etc., esp. Ch. xix; L. Melville, 62f. The passage from *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, which he had been reading when he fell into his opiate sleep, is one of refuge, a lovely space of 16 miles, walled in, 'and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure.' Note *in the midst*.

a huge star, Sirius, with the waters pouring from the cavern between his legs, to flow over Egypt. A bearded storm-spirit is linked with the pouring source."

Wordsworth, in *The Prelude*, opposing his Cumbrian Nature to the 'enormous City's turbulent world', declares that he prefers the former's wildness to the most magnificent of landscape-gardens, 'that famed paradise of ten thousand trees, or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight of the Tartarian dynasty composed', set 'in a clime from widest empire chosen'.

A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes
Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells
For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts,
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious hues,
Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase.
Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
In no discordant opposition, strong
And gorgeous as the colours side by side
Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds;
And mountains over all, embracing all;
And all the landscape, endlessly enriched
With waters, running, falling, or asleep.

Here are littered the various ingredients from the travels that make up *Kubla Khan*, without imaginative concentration. Wordsworth is rejecting the landscape-garden as the result of city-life—the effort of alienated man to escape his alienation by a pretence of harmony between art and nature. And by his choice of illustration he declares that such creations express the imperial State (an historically correct statement, as a *paradise* was originally a parkland kept by Persian nobles to express artificially the free clan-life actually destroyed by the State-development).

The emotional significance of the imagery of *Kubla Khan* then derives on the one hand from the whole complex quest, discovery, re-creation, revealed by the sea-voyages and by the aesthetic of landscape-gardening. On the other hand from Coleridge's inner life, which seeks to wrest the imagery from the curse, the distortions and guilts of a class-society. Here it is that the poem links with *The Ancient Mariner* its completion.

²¹ *Economy of Vegetation* also has (citing Argument) 'Northern Constellations, Ice-Islands navigated into the Tropic Sea. . . . Elijah on Mount Carmel. Departure of the Nymphs of Fire like Sparks from artificial Fire-works.' In the same Canto I, also 'Star-light Night seen in the Camera Obscura. . . . Rainbow Colours of the Morning and Evening Skies . . . Phosphoric Light, in the Evening . . . Menon's Harp . . . Luminous Flowers. Glow-worm, Fire-fly. Luminous Sea-Insects. Electric Eel . . . Phosphorus . . . Steam-engine applied to pumps . . . Halo round the Heads of Saints. . . .'

To get right inside, we must not only see it as the final concentration of the imagery implied by *The Lime-Tree Bower my Prison*, where the movement into Nature is realised (in the person of Lamb) as the escape from the capitalist city's vileness and the burden of bloodguilt. We must turn also to *The Three Graves*. Here the wicked mother tries to ruin her daughter's happiness, and in fact does wreck the girl, her lover, and her friend. The climax is set in the fantasy-dell, where the lover lies under a sun-glory (the colours of which the girls argue over) in the leaves. He starts up, half-raving, 'A mother too. . . . O God, forgive me, I have torn out her heart.'

Coleridge had been reading of the Oby witchcraft of the West Indies and wanted to show similar things at work among the peasantry of England. But the emotional stuff is surely the Lamb-tragedy, with the blame laid on the mother, but with the same point coming out—that the innocent (the lover, Lamb, the Lamb) bears the burden of the curse.

Here the light-centre into which the girls stare, with its twining threads of light, fails to save from the curse. In *The Ancient Mariner* the sight of coiling and flashing things of light (the water snakes with their varying colours) does serve to liberate from the bloodguilt; and in *Kubla Khan* the Alfoxden dell, transformed by the light-centre (the sun-glory giving way to the ice-dome of light, the moon), the release is rapturously achieved.

I do not wish to delve much further into the emotional and organic bases of *Kubla Khan*; but the following two citations will help to bring out points. First, Augustine, in his *Confessions* (ix, 5), speaks of the 'country-house of Cassiacum, where from the fever of the world we reposed in thee, with the eternal freshness of thy Paradise: for that thou hast forgiven him his sins on earth, in that rich mountain, that mountain which yieldeth milk, thy own mountains.'

The rich mountain (is said) to strengthen and enrich them by the excellence of his gifts; for this same milk, whence curds are formed, wonderfully represents grace, in that it flows from the rich stores of the mother's inner self, and with a delighting pity is poured into the little ones. (*Commentary cited by Pusey in his version.*)

There the underlying conviction of restored contact with the Mother, with the source of satisfaction and plenty, is brought out. But we must beware of reducing *Kubla Khan* to a simple daydream of womb-return. What it defines, in terms of organic imagery, is the triumphant sense of throwing off all the alienating and murderous pressures of class-society, with a return (movement-forward) to a relationship without guilt, from which plenty and joy emerge.

Take then Raleigh's poems, written in days awaiting death.

Over the silver mountains
Where spring the nectar fountains,
There will I kiss the bowl of bliss
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon every milken hill.

Behind the imagery lies the Eldorado Quest, the Mountain of Crystal described by Raleigh as seen on the first Guinea voyage 'towards sunset'. Here, in the first burst of capitalist expansion, the sources of plenty and fulfilment are felt to lie right ahead, attainable by a resolute effort; but in fact the quest has brought Raleigh to disaster and the shadow of death, found legally guilty. The imagery then retreats abstracted into the inner life.

Behind the personal and the imagic nexus lies the historical relations: in the last resort the Alfoxden poems represent Coleridge's imaginative statement about the French Revolution. They poetically resolve the problem that had been tearing him since the guillotining of the Girondins and the utopian scheme of Pantisocracy. They press below the superficial aspects of the historical situation, the immediately implicated hopes and fears for France, into a definition of the family-curse, the bloodguilt inherent in a class-society. They go beyond the partial terms in which politics presented themselves to Coleridge at the time, beyond the rationalist and idealist limitations of Hartley and Godwin, and take up the position that only a total transformation will avail—a complete absorption in Love, in acceptance of the life-process for itself (ending capitalist property-relations with their blood-guilt); and a concretion of the utopian scheme, expressed in the imagery of *Kubla Khan*, where man is truly in harmony with the Earth he has moulded to his deepest desire.

But these poems do not merely resolve Coleridge's personal struggle. They are able to resolve that struggle in the last resort only because they sum up and resolve a century's struggle.

The great mercantile outburst of the 18th century was linked on the one hand with Newton's scientific work (he analysed the spectrum while seeking to better the telescope to meet navigational needs) and on the other with the new capitalist forces; it thus begot a series of key-images in which the poets from Thomson and Savage onward sought to express their sense of the period's deep contradictions. The triumphant expansion (seen as a sea-voyage, as vast light-change), the intensifying crisis and alienation (seen as shipwreck, as abrupt violent light-change). The sunset-ship of the curse brings together these elements in their strongest clash and fusion. Hence its great importance to the poets and to Turner.

Coleridge's achievement is that he defined with the greatest force and concentration of imagery this struggle, this crisis of man. The flaw in the French Revolution, its bourgeois contradiction, which he could not grasp politically, he defined and overcame in the Alfoxden poems, finding poetically his resolution in the dream of harmony and innocence regained—the counterpart of his Utopian hopes. And out of this deep poetic understanding he evolved consciousness of the first forms of a dialectic of art and society. That is the Coleridge who matters to us, to our tradition, to our crisis to-day—the Coleridge we must understand and develop in our own work.

TWO STORIES

Jack Cope

ONLY THE STRONG LIVE

*Where are the great lands of the Xhosa, the watered valleys
shooting up fat corn ears? Stones, stones!*

*Where are the houses of Gaika and Gcaleka and Ndlambe?
Ashes!*

*Where are the plains of Zulu full to the sky-line with horned
cattle? Stones!*

And the milkpails flowing over the brim? Dashed down!

Where are the sweet pastures of Sotho? Ai, stones!

And the wisdom of the good laws? Ashes!

Where are the lion-proof cattle kraals of Ndebele? Stones!

The songs of the maidens and the fighting-men?

THIS was an unusual song. It went on with a swift, strong rhythm, pausing for the deep beat of the responses. One man standing in the middle of the low, dark room sang the lead and all the dancers swaying like smoke shadows about him answered in unison. In the corner a young man sat at the keys of a small church organ, its sweet wood-tones humming to an exciting and sensuous melody. A small girl kneeling half asleep shook out the beat with two small tins of pebbles.

Johnson Mveli, a square, solid man in an old military greatcoat and cloth cap, stood leaning at the doorpost in the darkness. The room was lit by two candles; a small room so low a tall man had to stoop at one end, papered with old newspaper, advertising posters, pages of brightly coloured American magazines. The floor was stamped earth covered with old lino cracked in places and letting in the damp. On a mattress near the organ two children were asleep. The shadows of the dancers slid over their little brown faces and sometimes a dreaming smile flickered on their lips.

'What kind of song is this?' Johnson said in a low voice to the hostess sitting at the door.

'Anyone can sing what he pleases,' she replied.

'He sings of the past that will never return. Why does he remind us and hurt the people? We have troubles enough.'

'The people do not listen, they dance,' she said.

'They do not listen with their heads, but their hearts hear and feel the pain. What is his name?'

'Nxele.'

'What! Does he use so great a name! Is he a prophet risen up again from the past of our people?' But she only laughed silkily.

Johnson brushed his hand wearily over his eyes. The dance came to an end. Someone threw another coin into the saucer and the organist started up again, a quick pulsing tempo. A young man in a red shirt and wide bags drew a girl into the centre of the floor. She was round and strong, robustly healthy and with the suppressed energy of a leopard on its trail. The two danced round each other; their bodies shook and their feet vibrated—all the squalor, the death and the filth of the shanty-town were forgotten. The world was under her feet. She was the past and the future, she and the children sleeping through the noise and whirl of the *stokvel*. The dancers would never tire but would dance until the sun arose through the mist and sordor of the Cape Town Flats slum to another winter's day.

It began to rain and Johnson pulled up his collar round his ears. He seemed to shrink into himself as he thought of going home. There was movement and life at the *stokvel*, even to look at it in passing, and the song Nxele sang had been strangely heart-rending. In the shack next door men were drinking beer, sitting on bankies and packing-cases in their overcoats, filling the air with rank smoke. The candle light shone on their black faces and picked out the whites of their eyes. Water leaked through the crazy roof making puddles round the men's boots.

Johnson threaded through the lines of dark rickety shacks between which the lanes were sometimes only an arm's width across. Figures brushed past him, treading in the black ooze that collected in pools. From the cracks in some walls glimmers of light showed yellow. Others were in total darkness as if life had gone out there.

Life held up its candle against strong winds in those human wastes. None but the strong could survive. To Johnson the thought of life had only one meaning—it was his boy baby lying feeble and listless in his wife's arms. They had had four children and two had already been carried in their little wooden boxes along the road of grief so often trodden by the people of the flats. The third was a girl, Aneta, who flourished like a dockweed in the waste, miraculously sound. Johnson had hoped the boy would grow like that; and he had for nearly a year, watched over by the three of them. Then something had taken him by the throat. For three weeks he had been slowly wasting away. They had spent every penny on the doctors and gone hungry themselves until neighbours had come, in loyalty to the ancient human bonds, to share their burden. He could not borrow much even on the security of his safe job as a Government employee in the Public Works Department.

That night Johnson's wife, Martha, had sent him out to find a few hours' release from the starkness of the shack and the illness against which they were helpless. But he had failed and his head seemed heavier than before. He could never forget Nxele's song of the lost days of fruitfulness, which was filled with regret and at the same time was a challenge beating in his ribs.

Between Johnson and his home was an open space grown over with scrubby grass and littered with refuse. The warrens of shacks sprang up casually like terrible eruptions. Sometimes they were scraped off as the afflicted Job scraped his sores with potsherds, but nothing was done against the disease of houselessness.

He had passed the foul lanes and was coming out into the open. There would only be ten minutes' walk ahead.

The raid started with the familiar sounds which are a knell in millions of ears—the roar of the pick-up vans, shrilling police whistles and the shouts as the cordon was thrown round the area. Johnson wanted to get home; there was that long stretch across the open and then he could disappear among the bunch of shanties where his own quarters were. Perhaps he could have walked across as if nothing concerned him—after all, he had his passport impressed with his finger-prints, he carried no liquor, and he had no suitcase or new clothes which always seemed to convince the police that a black man was a criminal. But something made him begin running. He went faster, the old coat flapped about his legs and the fine rain got in his eyes. Still, he knew the way and he must get home. Flashlights picked him out, a desperate running figure. The cordon closed on him. He fought to get home, shouting 'Let me go!' until he was sprawled out on the sand with a truncheon blow.

Johnson Mveli was sent to prison for three months hard labour on the serious charges of resisting arrest and attempting to escape from custody. On her first visit to him at the end of a month his wife came with a black veil over her face. They looked at each other through the bars without speaking and the tears ran down their faces. It was the first time Johnson knew that his boy had died.

In the prison at the same time with him was Nxele the singer who had also been caught in the raid. He kept the men's spirits up with a thousand stories, jokes and pithy sayings which were whispered through the prison and translated into the many languages of the condemned. Nxele said the kind of things that were remembered. But he had one trick that remained especially vivid in Johnson's mind. He filled a small tin can with black pebbles and on the surface he put a layer of white pebbles, chips of plaster and china. He passed it round for all to see. 'White on top,' he said with a merry laugh. Then he put the lid on and shook the can with a brisk clatter. When he took the lid off and passed it round they all could see and joined in his smile.

Johnson said: 'Yes, the black are on the top now, but where is the hand to shake them up?'

Nxele laughed again. 'He did not see the hand that did this!' The others joined in chaffing the doubter. They were amused but there was also something secretly exciting about this innocent little game.

'I see you do not shake perfectly,' Johnson persisted, 'because there are still two or three whites showing.'

'That must be,' Nxele said with sudden seriousness. 'You are a man who thinks and you will learn.'

It was a small trick and meant very little, yet Johnson Mveli thought of it again and again. Men learn from the things they see and the blows dealt out to them by life. When Johnson came out of prison he went straight to his home and found things had changed. The place was no longer there. The big nests of shacks had been smashed down. Officials of the municipality had sent down a tractor and they had simply put a long chain round the poor, crazy huts and pulled them down. The men had been at work and the women took out their belongings before the municipal people started up the tractor and brought everything tumbling. When the men came back from work they gathered in knots and there was a blackness of desperation in their brains. It was said to be for their own health, but they could not see it.

By the time Johnson came out, a great deal of the debris of the old shanties had been knocked or tied together into crude shelters. Wind blew through them from all sides in the long nights, and before dawn the thousands of people rose, the men to go to their work where strong bodies, steady hands and high honesty were needed and expected; the women to put on a clean and neat appearance for their tasks in the homes, the kitchens, wash-houses and the children's nurseries of the white masters.

The first warmth of spring was pushing up weeds and flowers among the remnants of the old shanties, the great stagnant pools of winter rain were shimmering and the wells from which the women drew their water, and paid for it, were fuller than ever of discoloured seepage.

Johnson stood and stared with his mouth drooping. He began to run, shouting 'Martha! Martha!' To the women he saw cooking at the open braziers he called as he passed 'Where is Martha?' They pointed the way silently, and he found her. A shelter had been heaped up of old iron and sacks and planks and tar-drums, and there were no doorposts or door. The roof was four feet high so a man had to squat under it. He peered inside and there was Martha lying ill and very thin on a heap of newspapers and sacks. Johnson stood there swaying on his feet with a baffled, almost plaintive look on his face. He understood now why she had not met him at the jail doors. Then his heart gave a leap. Out of the hovel like one of the flowers among the scraps little Aneta came springing and flung herself in his arms. She cried and laughed and danced at the same time and hid herself under the flaps of his coat, clinging to his legs to tell herself again and again that he was really there. Martha also smiled to welcome him and raised herself on her elbow.

On his jail release money they had enough for a good meal. Martha was able to take some soup and felt better, and little Aneta filled herself until her stomach was round. Next day Johnson went to his job at the Public Works Department Depot. At first he was surprised to see a gang of poor-looking white men checking in, and none of his old workmates. But the foreman said: 'Sorry, Johnson, all the old hands have been sacked. With the new Government we're only

allowed to take "civilized" labour.' He jerked his pencil in the direction of the men.

'I worked here six years, was there anything wrong with me?' Johnson asked.

'No. You're one of the best.'

'Uncivilized, is that it?'

'Well, you're black; I can't get away from that, though we need the men like you who can read and write, and work. I'll say you can work!'

'No place for me now?'

'Not here. I don't like losing you Johnson, in spite of you getting into trouble. I don't mind telling you that, see. But you'll get another job.'

'Where?'

'I dunno. Maybe I can fix you up. Come back here in a couple of days, see?'

'Maybe.' Johnson shrugged and stuffed his hands in his coat pockets.

He spent the rest of that day going from factory to factory, to warehouse and construction works. Everywhere he was turned away. One man offered him a cut-rate of wages no workman could accept. And when he got home, walking all the way to save the cash for food, he was tired. Only the strong live—he was strong, reliable, hard as a steel spring. But what was the good when the others held everything, the food, houses, clothing, the railroads and machines, and they would not buy the only thing he had to sell, his strength.

He found Martha a little better. She sat up smiled faintly when she saw him come to the opening of the shelter. But her eyes were still sunken and dark-ringed.

'Mama could sit in the sun to-day,' Aneta shrilled happily, skipping round him on tiptoes.

'It's good,' he said smiling. 'The sun is our friend.' And with a saddening of his eyes as he glanced over the dreary flats to where Table Mountain rose hugely in the evening haze above South Africa's mother city, Cape Town, he added: 'We should be ploughing and sowing our corn now, but the land has all gone.' He thought of Nxele's song.

He was up as usual on the following morning but did not hurry to get on his clothes and look for work. 'I am getting another job sometime, but to-day I mean to build a hut,' he told Martha. He was bending over a half-bucket of water washing down his thick arms and chest and the first gleam of dawn shone on his wet, dark skin.

'They will pull it down,' she said.

'Let them. There is nothing more to lose, and I can build another.'

He heard the rattle of a tin and it reminded him of the children beating time at the *stokvel* dances with their little cans of pebbles. But when he turned he saw it was Nxele.

'Morweni!' he said, delighted. 'Shake that tin again, Nxele, it makes me laugh.'

'Morweni, Mveli, I will help you build your hut to-day. To-morrow—who knows?'

George W. Brandt

NO LIQUOR FOR INDIANS

YOU could tell the train had crossed over from Manitoba into Ontario, because the little newsboy passing down the aisle was now selling Toronto Stars. He did well and got rid of the whole stack in a matter of minutes; for there was relief in the printed page from the monotonous splendour rushing by outside: the rock-fringed forgotten lakes, the streams shooting milkily over boulders, the low, stony pine-topped hills, the coniferous forest sprinkled with birch trees and maples, and in it the occasional camp or cluster of shacks that proclaimed the insignificance of man and of all his works.

Jim Dolan discarded the news section of his paper and took up the sports page. His feet were up on the seat opposite, right by the entrance to the car.

Somebody touched his shoulder. 'Mind if I look at the comics, mister?'

It was the old man sitting behind him.

'Go right ahead.'

The old man crawled out from behind and settled down opposite Dolan, shoving his feet aside and putting up his own feet on Dolan's seat. He was white-haired, weather-beaten, in a filthy red-and-brown mackinaw, right out of the bush. Dolan straightened his silk tie and hid behind the sports page.

There was a hiss on the other side of the paper, a grating noise, cackle. Dolan lowered his paper again. The old man, stabbing the page before him with a grimy index finger, was shaking with merriment. He looked up and saw Dolan inspecting him coldly, and his laughter dried up.

'Maggie and Jiggs,' he said. 'My favourite strip. Haven't seen it for months.'

Jim Dolan stepped back into character.

'I follow Li'l Abner myself.'

He gave a smile. If he was going to be pally with the old guy, might as well give him the grade-A treatment. The conversation caught on. Why was it that a lot of people only went for one strip, just couldn't see any other, not if you clubbed 'em; just the way you're made, one guessed; well, it took all sorts.

'You're a salesman, I bet you,' said the old man. 'Correct? What's your line?'

'Work garments and mackinaws. I cover the prairies. You could do with a mackinaw, grandpa.'

The old man chuckled. 'Can't hook me, son.'

'Jim Dolan's the name.'

'Mine's Bob—Bob MacKay. How are you, Jim.'

'How are you, Bob. What's your racket?'

'Trapping, mostly—beaver, mink, marten, rats. My own boss, that's what I like. A grand life. In the summer I take Yankee tourists around Lake Superior. Going to Sudbury now to see my daughter, before the tourist season.'

Dolan said playfully, 'Why don't you buy yourself a new mackinaw, though? To surprise your daughter, like. I could let you have one of my samples.'

'Naw, the shock would kill her.'

'Well then, you want to spruce up for them Yankee millionaires, don't you?'

'They wouldn't like me too pretty. Wouldn't look real.'

The train was slowing down along a curve, and Jim leaned back into the corner of the window to catch a glimpse of the station up ahead.

His eyes met eyes, black and shy. The brown object in the clearing stood petrified—with curiosity or with fear? Jim gripped the trapper's arm. The thing swung around, leapt and vanished in the bushes, a brown flash.

'See that fawn?'

The trapper nodded.

'Boy,' said Dolan, 'would I ever like to be out there right now, banging away with my .22!'

The clearing has passed out of sight.

'Holy suffering Jesus,' said the trapper, 'you ought to be ashamed of yourself—a young animal like that! Jesus!'

There was the station, a mere shed by the railway tracks, painted rust with the name up in white lettering; behind it a few shacks, their white-wash peeling, flanked by small vegetable gardens with one or two flowers: the whole community seemed thrown down, as if by accident, in a clearing hewn out of the bush. The tin ads. up on the general store on the hillside screamed of soft drinks and tobaccos.

On the platform stood a few Indian kids, their faces frozen with curiosity; they were looking at the smoky-haired monster that ran to and fro between fabulous cities.

'What a dump!' said Jim Dolan.

Way up ahead, the station-master was heard shouting: 'All aboard! All aboard!'; with a soft jolt the wheels began to roll again, and the scene at the window went gathering speed.

Hesitantly the swinging door at the end of the car was pushed open. The Indian lad—fifteen, perhaps sixteen years old—was wearing

a green-and-black mackinaw; tucked under his arm he held a bundle. As he made a quick survey of the car, his eyes, black and shy, were ready to apologize.

Trees, bushes and lonesome lakes, made unfamiliar to him by the incredible speed, were racing past the window.

He shifted his weight from one foot to another. He brushed the long black strands of hair out of his eyes.

Swinging open behind him, the door struck him in the back.

'For gosh sakes, son,' said the conductor, coming in, 'don't just stand there!'

The boy looked perplexedly up and down the car; for a few moments it seemed as if he were going to say something.

'Well, sit down here,' said the conductor, indicating the seats by the door. 'Take your feet off those seats, gentlemen.'

The trapper shifted over towards the window and the Indian sat down next to him, his bundle between his knees.

'Now let's see your ticket, son. Toronto? What the hell are you going to Toronto for?'

'Work.'

The conductor ho-hummed, punched the ticket and passed on.

'Tell you what, Bob,' said Dolan, 'I'll make a special price for you, how's that?'

'It's still no dice; I don't want your goddamn mackinaw.'

Dolan gave the trapper one long look made up of half a dozen feelings.

'Well, here's something you do want,' he said, a mickey of rye suddenly in his hand. The Indian let his glance stray past the bottle without moving his head.

'Trying to get me liquored up, eh?' said the trapper; but he reached up on the wall behind him and pulled two dixie cups out of the rack.

Dolan poured.

'Well, here's to you, grandpa . . . happy hunting!'

'Happy selling to you!'

After the fifth cup the old man began to hum softly. Suddenly he burst into song: 'Old MacDonald had a farm . . .'

'Quit squawking, Bob,' said Dolan, 'do you want to get us into trouble?'

'Ee I ee i o!'

'God, man, what a weak stomach you got!'

'Out of practise,' said the trapper cheerfully. 'Haven't tasted a drop for months. Yippee!'

The four golden service bars on the conductor's cuff were gleaming sternly before their eyes. The conductor's gnarled finger was pointing.

'Put that bottle away, and I don't mean maybe! I don't want no drinking on *this* car!'

His eye fell on the Indian.

'He have any?'

'Sure,' said Dolan, pulling a sincere face, 'grandpa here give him some.'

The Indian kept shaking his head, his eyes big and pleading.

'I could put you off the train, son,' said the conductor, 'you know you're not supposed to touch any of that stuff.'

'Well, he touched it,' said Dolan, shaking his head.

Suddenly the trapper was sober. He pointed a grimy finger right back at the conductor. 'Don't listen to that old buzzard Dolan. It's Dolan's bottle anyways. I never gave an Indian a drop of liquor in all my life.'

'Well, don't you go breaking the law,' said the conductor to the lad, 'or off you get, so help me. You can walk all the way to Toronto, see how you like that. And put that damned bottle away, you!'

'O.K., O.K.,' said Dolan, slipping it into his hip pocket with practised ease.

The conductor left.

'And who're you calling an old buzzard?' said the salesman. 'Jeeze, I've a good mind to poke you right in the eye. Can't take a joke, that's your trouble!'

'Leave the kid alone, why can't you?'

'Trouble with you is you're bushed, grandpa!'

'And you're mad because I won't buy your crummy mackinaw!'

'You're bushed, grandpa, you're bushed!'

'Don't shout, you crazy old drummer!'

The Indian leaned back and closed his eyes. In the blackness the voices ground on and on, harsh as wheelbarrows on gravel. His eyes were closed and the wheels went around and around, the voices crossing and slashing the air, the signals flashing, tracks crossing and recrossing, lakes, trees and bushes dropping away and vanishing till there comes the final clearing with no more trees left; stop, the end of the road, the old ways a laughter to the white man, and hemming us in, the mountainous houses, the smoke and steel of the fabulous city and the monstrous clashing of incomprehensible wills.

Montagu Slater

OPERATION KILLER

or the shadow across the English tongue

ALMOST as long as I can remember there has been a shadow of America over this island. And now when its gloom thickens there is the familiar nightmare feeling of I have been here before. Ibsen's Brand coming down the mountain and catching a glimpse of the home country, said: 'Ah! I know where I am again now. Every boathouse, every homestead . . . but I fancy it looks greyer now and smaller: and the snow drift on the mountain hangs further out than it did. It has cut off another strip from the valley's narrow tract of sky: it beetles, menaces, overshadows, shuts it in, and steals away the sunshine more than ever. Was the fjord so grim and narrow then?' The mood is to be fought and vanquished but to be understood first.

I speak as a writer—there's nothing like leather!—and it is the shadow over literature, language and art I am chiefly thinking of. I know the shadow spreads wider, it does damage elsewhere too. In science—even in sport—'falls the shadow'. It is in the nature of things that a predominant capitalist state at this phase of history spreads not benefits but destruction among its neighbours. There is a general case and I am concerned only with a particular aspect, attempting a very rough sketch of its history during my own generation.

I am old enough to remember the 'twenties. At the end of the first World War the U.S.A. was economically dominant but it was some years before the effect was felt in literature or language. Indeed, as one remembers it, American writers of the early 'twenties stood on the whole for decency against a rage of post-war reaction in the U.S. They had not yet been, as later the Nazis were to put it, 'co-ordinated'. Dreiser was writing *The American Tragedy*; Upton Sinclair *The Hundred Percent American*, a savage attack on police spies in the Left-wing movement; and Sinclair Lewis was writing *Babbitt*. But there was another wing of American literature represented by the exiles.

Now these were interesting. They included T. S. Eliot just getting into his stride with *The Waste Land*. Till recently they had included Henry James and they still included Logan Pearsall Smith: all three anglophiles, all three of rich, well-connected American stock, the sons of fervid Protestant evangelicals. *How Little Logan Came to Jesus* was the title of one of Logan Pearsall Smith's early squibs, circulated privately among the *élite*. For these three, James, Eliot and Smith, had turned against their respectable parents, they bought

their way into sophisticated society and they were launching a silver age in literature of preciosity based on London, brilliant with a sort of decaying phosphorescence, defiantly decadent.

The dollar in those days was worth so much in European currency that there were several schools of exiles. The not-so-rich ones based themselves on Paris since the franc was cheaper than the pound. Generally, too, they had come over as servicemen or with the Red Cross. Such were Ernest Hemingway and E. E. Cummings. Unlike James, Eliot and Smith, they first met Europe on a democratic basis and their early books like Cummings's *The Enormous Room* and Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, were warm with affection for ordinary Frenchmen and ordinary Italians.

This wave of emigrants however went back home after the Wall Street crash in 1929, losing such roots as they had in Europe (Hemingway tried half-heartedly to regain these during the Spanish Civil War); they never seem to have rooted themselves again in their native soil. Yet, at first, in the 'twenties they seemed to be stumbling on the discovery that democracy is international. The discovery tended to be clouded by the fact that their dollars exposed them to too many temptations in Europe, too many fancy drinks. But while hangover was their favourite theme, they sometimes peered through the cloud into the world of men about them. When they got home in 1929 they couldn't even enjoy the fancy drinks, everything seemed dull, their cosmopolitanism went bad.

But at least in the 'twenties we could not feel that the shadow over literature was oppressive. There was a certain patronizing approach—Ezra Pound patronized Dante and his pupil Eliot patronized Shakespeare—but we knew this was an unfortunate habit due to the fact that the dollars bought far too many lira, francs and pounds. And at least they read Dante and Shakespeare.

II

While all this was happening Hollywood was establishing itself. In the same year as the Wall Street crash the first talking film was given a regular run in a London cinema. It was a convenient coincidence for me. From here I think we can see a new period beginning.

Lenin's words about the art of the film have been so often repeated that we lose the sharpness of their meaning. The film is the art form of the people. And it cuts both ways. In David Magarshack's recent life of Stanislavsky I was struck by a quotation from the Russian playwright Ostrovsky, who said: 'Poetry as expressed in drama is nearer to the common people than any other branch of literature. Every other literary work is written for educated people, but tragedies and comedies are written for the whole people. This closeness to the common people does not degrade dramatic poetry: on the contrary, it adds to its strength and prevents it from becoming vulgar and trivial.' If Ostrovsky were alive I think he would have said in the first sentence 'drama and film'. I think even his last sentence holds

good of the film since the film magnates constantly find they have to take drastic measures if the screen is to be preserved for the vulgar and the trivial to keep poetry and talent out of film-work (even to the extent of legal indictment of the talented). But we were talking about the rise of Hollywood.

Historically as we know, the film in England was in a leading position before the first World War. But the first World War held it back and the almighty dollar established Hollywood. This is not an essay about films but the point must be made here for the more scholarly to elaborate if necessary that Hollywood in the 'thirties became the most extreme example yet known in the world of commodity art. Most of its characteristics are too well known to need comment. Wherever in the world, literally from China to Peru, Hollywood spotted talent among directors, actors or writers, the talent was bought, fetched to Los Angeles, and then degraded. In extreme instances complete films were bought—French films provide the outstanding instances—the original was suppressed, sometimes even the negative was destroyed, and a vulgar and trivial Hollywood version substituted.

This is the tail of the dollar; we shall go wrong if we don't look at the head as well. Hollywood even in the 'thirties was never quite as foolish as it pretended. An 'industry' was being co-ordinated. Commodity art is forgery but the faking must be skilful otherwise nobody is deceived, and nothing is sold. To take one instance: consider the cleverly spread myth about 'fabulous prices' paid in dollars for film-rights in books and plays followed by the curious process known as 'piling-up' writing talent on the script. Thus A rewrote the original, technically known as 'source material'; B rewrote A; C rewrote B; then came D and E, till nothing was left but the title which was then changed on the suggestion of the publicity department. These antics concealed two hard facts the industry had grasped, though arty-crafty people sometimes refuse to face them: (1) plot, as Aristotle knew, is the basis of all drama on stage or screen, and the stories or fables that yield such plots are as few and precious as uranium deposits; (2) these fables only yield well when worked on by writer after writer—Giraudoux, for example, named his *Amphytrion*³⁸ because he calculated it was the 38th play written on the fable—and all this rewriting is a means of testing and re-testing such guides as can be discovered to audience reaction.

Another piece of sense behind the nonsense concerned 'stars'. Now in the true sense 'stars' were not invented by Hollywood. There has never been a more magnificent star than our own Edmund Kean, for whom Keats wrote *Otho the Great*. So far as acting talent went, Hollywood was in the market for the real thing—but of course only, in Hollywood's favourite word, to exploit it. Exploitation means narrowing and narrowing the limits of the actor's art, giving him an overdose of publicity till the public gets tired, and then throwing him away like a sucked orange. In order to exploit personality, human personality is destroyed.

Now turn back to Ostrovsky, or to Lenin. Hollywood prided itself on its strict commercial outlook, on its organized salesmanship, its scientific measures of the audience. The pendulum is always swinging. Or to change the metaphor, when you're catching fish in a trap you have to keep putting down ground bait. Thus in a popular art like the film the audience every so often gets its own back. So we find Hollywood sponsors Chaplin, *The Grapes of Wrath*, Paul Muni in *Pasteur and Jaurez* (much as the B.B.C. sponsors *ITMA* and *Take it From Here*, or as an antique dealer mixes originals with his fakes). Every so often popular pressure forces commodity art back to poetry (and I include *ITMA* and Chaplin in the poetry).

But the fakes make the real money. When the deception is so good the audience trusts the conjurer, then he can really get to work. The function of this cosmopolitan Hollywood of the 'thirties was not only to Americanize us and to sell 'the American way of life', but to knock the heart and character and self-confidence out of the buyer nations. And since we share a language this naturally worked most strongly in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. It takes quite an effort to recall at what low ebb was our artistic self-confidence in the 'thirties. We were 'the land without music', our writers had mostly gone to America, as film-makers we were beneath contempt, and (at least all the pundits of the 'thirties said so) the very language, as we speak it, had lost its fire, its guts, its fertility.

We made a come-back, beginning with resurgent nationalisms, Irish with Sean O'Casey, Welsh and Scottish (with, for instance, the early poems of Hugh MacDiarmid). Australia sent Jack Lindsay and others; India sent Mulk Raj Anand. And England? I have just mentioned *ITMA*. Let it stand as a symptom of other things too. It was in a sense a signal that the English language had a vitality of its own, better and stronger than the commodity slang of Hollywood. A Swiss newspaper during the war spoke of the English people as 'proud and fierce'. We hardly recognized ourselves but the phrase made sense. We recovered the language along with our self-confidence. But that comes later in the argument. At the moment I am concerned with the bad patch in the late 'thirties.

The primitive toughness of the phoney language of Hollywood reflected, as Hollywood always does, certain realities—among other things true working-class toughness. But it was easy for this to be twisted into the sort of thriller Hollywood likes best, the thriller based on the theory that man is inescapably evil, and exults in the wish for death. *The Postman Always Knocks Twice* was the outstanding example at the time. The mood of the early German films, many pre-war French films, and the Hollywood toughies was roughly that of what later came to be called *existentialism*, a disbelief in life and peace, organized as far as possible into a system.

Another fact to be added was that the working-class movement in the U.S.A. was for good historical reasons in an earlier phase than those of Europe. The class war in the U.S.A. was fought in more primitive forms with tear gas and thuggery, and for this reason its

stories and reflections in art had the same look of toughness as Hollywood thrillers. The movements in Britain and France faced a highly-developed social democracy and subtler dangers. But the emotional reflections of this situation compared with Hollywood toughies seemed 'soft'. In reality, as we know, because of the greater complexity of the situation and the higher phase of the movement, so should its emotional reflection have demanded a higher form of organization. But our tastes in general had been deliberately coarsened by Hollywood, our palates were conditioned to dislike 'the wine of the country'. Symptoms cropped up sometimes in unexpected places. I remember a Gabriel joke in the *Daily Worker* near the end of the 'thirties: Gabriel, writing, not drawing this time, remarked that the players in Unity Theatre would soon need lessons in English, they had talked nothing but imitation American for so many years. The shadow can fall on the left as well as the right. Then the blackout came down, and a year or so later we woke up to find ourselves in a very different situation.

III

It takes another deliberate effort to remember what we used to call rather glibly 'the cultural upsurge'. It was an unmistakable fact. After the blitz and the invasion threat of 1940 the first signs that the British people had become proud and fierce occurred—is it after all so strange?—in the arts; the first big tours of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Penguin New Writing, C.E.M.A. (later called The Arts Council) and last in point of time the newly-discovered maturity of the Old Vic and Sadlers Wells were some of the healthy shoots. It would be easy to add a score of others. The very language grew new shoots, Service slang discovered in it new turns and subtleties. In the present publishing season a selection by John Lehmann from the stories he published in New Writing has roused a general cry, like the Duke of Wellington's, of 'Damned good, how did we manage to do it!' Nor did it all happen suddenly in the war as critics sometimes like to make out. Some of the best wartime story writers like John Sommerfield gained their spurs in the fight for a national culture in the 'thirties. The same applies to war poets like Roy Fuller and Hamish Henderson, and war novelists like Alexander Baron and John Cousins. But the 'forties saw the great spurt. The land without music became the land with its own music. Those subtleties of perception and emotion that go with our way of life if not with Hollywood's, found many-coloured reflections. In a work like *Peter Grimes*, for example, music, drama and poetry began to come together in a way we had striven for over a decade.

Once again—and for the same good reasons—the decisive battles were fought over the films. Our film industry which had been a laughing stock, got up and knocked Hollywood into a cocked hat. In this case there was no question the war and the upsurge came together. But I still remember the comment of an Englishman who

came home from Washington to look at our films. 'Oh dear, no,' he said, 'it's a different war!'—meaning the American war was different. But that was before Operation Overlord, and anyone who takes another look now at *The True Glory*, the joint Anglo-American film about the advance to the Rhine made by Carol Reed and Garson Kanin (I recommend it as a historical exercise for film societies) will react, I should think, with horror at the deterioration of spirit that has taken place since then—but also I hope with a more enheartening thought that what happened once may happen again. But the seeds of destruction of the new British film industry were sown long before the war ended, the gentleman from Washington who found Britain was in 'a different war' and other people like him were at once taken into consultation on how we should make films suitable for American tastes—and the inevitable result followed.

Yet now we look back we can see that for five whole years we were free from the American shadow. The shadow had lifted, there were even sunbeams of comradeship. (Again an odd memory: I stood with an American in the late war years watching Ted Willis and Jack Lindsay's ABCA play on *Lend-Lease*, fiery in its belief in man's future. My American was moved, but his first comment was: 'Gosh! You English have got a shock coming to you!')

'Ah! I know where I am again, now. Every boathouse, every home-
stead . . . But I fancy it looks greyer now and smaller: and the
snow-drift on the mountains hangs further out that it did . . . it
beetles, menaces, overshadows . . .' This is where we came in.

IV

Except for the five years during and immediately after the war the American shadow has 'sicklied o'er' the self-confidence and native character of art in Britain. But it doesn't need another war to free us, it needs a peace.

Hollywood of course lost both its monopoly and its confidence during the war: and since then it has been reduced to driving talent furiously away. So what is left but sheer dollar pressure and pornography, commodity art in its worst decadent phase? What has perhaps the most fearsome significance is the abrupt decline in the Californian air of writers who at any rate began by writing well—for example, the latter work of Clifford Odets. Or take Irwin Shaw, whose *Peace on Earth* was such a successful production at the Unity Theatre towards the end of the 'thirties, and whose recent novel, *The Young Lions*, turned out to be the prototype of so many American novels since, a version of the Kinsey report in fiction, one chapter to each perversion. The interesting fact about Hemingway's last novel—it ought to have been dedicated to MacArthur—is that both its war-mongering and its pornography are senile. There is very little attempt in the last phase to mix a few originals with the fakes: it is not so necessary now the business is no longer conducted in the old peaceful way but at the muzzle of a gat.

No doubt we shall find that magazine and book publishing go the same way as films, and that the Americans buy their way into the British market. The exhibitor showing American films gets them cheaper and has (he hopes) a chance of more profit. This may soon happen to the bookseller. The situation is more desperate this time in the sense that the weapons are cruder, the aggressor knows that time is not with him, the MacArthurs of this world see death in front of them. But the true ground for confidence is that in this generation of the shadow and its momentary lifting, writers, artists and musicians have gained a costly experience: and, more to the point, so have their audience, so have the people of Britain! There was very nearly a cultural tragedy in Britain in the 'thirties when the English language lost heart. History repeats itself, said Marx, but the tragedy becomes farce. This time there won't be nearly a cultural tragedy. *Time* publications will try to overrun us and the comic strip will half throttle us, but we have learned in a hard school, and I guess we shall know how to act in this farce.

We should be on our guard of course against confusing the American people with their MacArthurs. I have just been reading an account of the Soviet film *Meeting on the Elbe*. It contains a quotation from a speech by the Soviet commandant of half a town—it is divided by the Elbe and the other half has an American commandant. And the Russian says: 'We love America. We love that land of brave, honest people, the land of Jack London, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Thomas Edison and Franklin Roosevelt. Never shall we forget the brave American soldiers we met here on the Elbe. We love and respect the American people for whom the imperialist warmongers have nothing but hate and contempt.'

This is so well put it sets us thinking of the general problem. Our cultures in the British Commonwealth of Nations and that of the United States will be bound together so long as English remains one language. Never in history have so many diverse peoples used one language. The Latin Empire and Byzantium were less populous. Of national cultures it goes without saying that the better they are, the more highly individual they are, the more they are themselves. Such a process of national development might well enrich the English language—up to the point indeed where it splits off into several. There can be a beneficial exchange in culture—just as we gave America folk songs which they gave us back in a new form. Culturally we owe much to the United States; they owe much to us, and this is a commerce in which both parties are gainers. It is only in the Hollywood game, the commodity art sold by travellers in death, that all parties lose.

Jack Beeching

ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES

ONCE upon a time we used to think that it was solely Hemingway characters who tried to stop themselves thinking by means of repeated potation and fornication. Then the Yanks came over here and bought up all our whisky at five quid a bottle, and took back thirty thousand of our womenfolk in one vast Sabine Rape. About then we began to perceive that deadening the higher nerve-centres by soaking and rutting was in fact a characteristic part of the Yankee way of life.

Indeed, as his last novel indicates, we misjudged Ernest Hemingway altogether. He is a cut above the average Yank. He has at least two personal characteristics that should endear him to Englishmen.

Thus, although he pretends like billyo to be a hearty—and what sensible man wouldn't, in Yankeeland, where a man is judged by his torso?—he is soaked to the fingertips in European culture. He doesn't, like the average Yankee pundit, just pretend to be cultured. In fact, he pretends not to be. But he is. He's a morbidly sensitive, systematically cultured man with big muscles.

And the second difference between Hemingway and his fellow countrymen is that he knows war isn't something in Technicolor, that you watch from a soft-sprung fauteuil. He learned what war was in the trenches of Lombardy and the retreat of Caparetto.

He belongs—in a sense that none of the late General Pershing's red-baiting legionaries could possibly belong—to that hermetic society within our society, the veterans of 1914-18. Men who had four years of unbelievable hell, and then came back to an indifferent world that had changed slightly for the worse. Men who have known the sort of war where there are no kisses for liberators, only brothels; no popular heroes, only self-inflicted wounds.

They are middle-aged or even elderly now, and many of them are a little sorry for themselves (they have a right to be), for they live in a world that is beginning to be taken in by the self-same lies that took them in as young men. But to this world of 1951 they cannot readily communicate their peculiar and ghastly experiences.

This is what lies behind those querulous and petulant anecdotes about warfare and generals in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. Anecdotes that so baffled our run-of-the-mill critics who were getting ready mechanically to applaud a new best-seller. Hemingway was doing what he has every right to do. He was playing the old soldier.

The book, he says himself, is a specimen of the 'higher mathematics' of the novel. That means, the author arranges an apparently simple narrative to have many layers of significance and meaning. It is a serious business for him, however odd the result looks to us. It has

taken him ten years' work. At one stage, so report has it, he tore up a completed first draft, and started again right from scratch.

No one has been very nice to the book over here. For one thing, Hemingway was schoolboyishly rude about the British Army, and we sedentary literary men are all jingoes under our skin. For another, even where his higher mathematics were understood, they didn't succeed. Not by a long chalk.

Simply because Hemingway apes the typical American hearty (but secretly is cultured, and has a private personal experience of imperialist trench-warfare) his literary failure is really more interesting than another man's success. If we are to become an American colony, we must learn all we can about these new sahibs.

The plot is another stereo of the evergreen Hemingway Story. There's a soldier, aged fifty, like as two peas except for age to the Yankee soldier of thirty years before in *A Farewell to Arms*. This one is a colonel in Trieste, broke down from a brigadier, a bit punch-drunk and with a dicky heart.

He goes on leave to Venice, and meets all the friends of the young soldier of thirty years ago, but they're older too, of course, and have risen to be head-waiters.

There's the usual Hemingway woman. You know the type—they have labels stuck on saying: 'English nurse' or 'Spanish partisan' or 'Italian countess', but they're all wishfulfilment pushovers. This time it's an 'Italian countess', unbelievably beautiful and ruts like a rabbit. But we're spared the slow-motion descriptions of copulation this time—it's all done by suggestion and inference (that's higher mathematics for you!).

For most of the book the pair of them are either drinking or fornicating or having long, conversational breathers.

She's a pushover—yes. But she's an Italian countess, too—namely, the incarnation of years of culture. Someone who goes right back to the *quattrocento* when the Italians were as bloody-minded as the frontiersmen in Wyoming, except that they also wrote splendid poetry and painted immortal pictures.

The countess keeps forcing antique jewellery and paintings on the colonel, as if to emphasize this deplorable historical distinction. He is obliged against his will to accept. Make what you like of it.

The colonel discovers that he gets a kick out of calling this countess 'daughter'. There are chapters in textbooks of morbid psychology about people who feel a lot better (even though they may not be very sane) once they establish that their parents are really their children. Because Yankeeland, as typified according to all the rules of higher mathematics by Colonel Richard Cantwell, is our veritable offspring, God help us. It's the place people escaped to when they couldn't stand the grim reality of Europe any more. They sailed across the Atlantic, taking their day-dreams with them, and went farther and farther West until they finally got to Hollywood.

They've tried very hard, the colonel and the countess, they've tried both in bedrooms and in gondolas, but she hasn't conceived a son yet.

And by the end of the book it's too late, because the general has died in the back of his car from a heart attack. But he leaves her his shot-guns.

Those shot-guns are significant, too. This is a book where everything is significant. The colonel used them the day before for a duck-shoot. The wild duck—sinister creatures—had flown west in great irresistible flocks from the Danube, where they had fattened on the grain of the Hungarian steppes. Familiar as we now are with the higher mathematics, we can grasp the point even without an explanatory footnote. (Of course, even to a sharpshooting Yankee colonel, shooting Russians is somewhat harder than shooting duck, but the principle is the same.) A low-bred Italian beater does his best to ruin the shoot (I hope that's another omen, too). Nevertheless, the colonel got quite the kick he expected out of it. But alas all the shooting and the swiving did for him in the end.

Yes, that's a fair sample, properly transmogrified, from this sad rag-bag by the most distinguished living Yankee novelist. Such talent in the small things, too, and sincerity, and mature skill, such complex and sustained symbolism, such painfully groping historical parallels, all gone to squash around a central mess of hysteria and self-pity.

Presumably Hemingway was striving after truth during these past ten years. If he were simply dollar-hungry he could have made much more money in much quicker ways. And indeed, the truth of our complicated, disintegrating world is not easily perceived and portrayed. But no artist can hope to find the truth who permits himself, even with a part of himself, to act as devil's advocate.

On the one hand, Hemingway is paid thirty thousand dollars for the film rights of a single story—quite a pile of pennies to play ducks and drakes with down on his private ranch in Cuba. Big money like that is liable to pin down the man of the strongest integrity with a million invisible threads (just as Gulliver was tied) to the milieu from which the money comes. But in the years when this novel was written, the big and powerful country of Yankeeland was handed over to be run by Missourian political racketeers, stock-exchange gamblers and career generals. Run at the double towards war—and aggressive, predatory, profitable war, too, or do you still believe, you Z man, all the toffee-nosed mularky about 'defence'?

On the other hand, Hemingway, unlike Senator Vandenberg and Senator Dulles, knows imperialist war from the infantryman's point of view. He has seen the military police shooting down the Socialist deserters after Caparetto. He admits that for a military advantage his countrymen could drop a bomb on Saint Mark's, Venice, and contaminate all the waters of the lagoons with bubonic plague. Rich, bloody-minded Yanks, these—cousins germane to those who came over to Italy and bought up all the paintings from the *quattrocento*, having themselves no art and being powerless to create a living art of their own.

They meet in Venice. Ah, Venice!

Venice, of course (more symbolism here), was built by the first

of the go-getters. Venetians had run the gamut of all the current Yankee diplomatic tricks long before Columbus across the Appenines in Genoa was so much as a twinkle in his father's eye. Their most typical triumph was when they took on the fourth Crusade as a commercial proposition, and ran it as a mere private freebooting venture. (May I remind you that in those days crusades were waged against the heretic, not the bolshevist?) It is not recorded whether the rest of Christendom was successfully bamboozled when the Venetians calmly invaded Christian Constantinople instead of pagan Jerusalem, but then there was no glib and obedient penny newspapers in those days.

Yet thanks to some un-American activity which they haven't quite succeeded so far in analysing (much less synthesising) in the universities of the Middle West, the Venetians managed along with their commerce to produce Titian and build St. Mark's.

The descriptions of Venice are beautifully done. Hemingway must love Venice and the flat alluvial plain of Lombardy almost as much as the people who live there. Beautifully done. The colonel himself has such a taste for beauty that he can't really be a colonel. He thinks of Breughel as he drives along the autostrada. He listens to a Communist waiter and hears the accents of Caporetto. The book doesn't call the waiter a Communist, of course, because after all, the waiter's character is sympathetic and the book had damned well better be taken up by a rich Yankee Book of the Month Club if it is going to best-sell under high-pressure Yankee publishing conditions.

The girl isn't really a girl, either. Just a projection of the beauty and antiquity and culture of Europe. And the colonel, in his pleasant aspect, isn't a colonel at all, but just Ernest Hemingway, a morbidly sensitive, systematically cultured man, playing at soldiers. It's a game that's fashionable just now in Yankeeland.

The other, the dark, disagreeable, incredible side of the colonel is Hemingway trying to portray as a human being—indeed, to identify himself with—one of those braggart, touchy, dehumanized professional soldiers he had opportunities of observing and despising in Italy in 1917 and France in 1914. So the colonel's ruminations on art and love are jumbled up with specified guilts about the last war and the war before last. Breaking turgidly into the narrative comes nagging, nightmarish gossip of the sort in which staff officers engage so as to blunt in their own minds the human implications of their filthy activities.

In short, in Hemingway's colonel, a human being and a monster are tied up in the same person. This dual conception of the representative character, even though it distorts the novel wildly, has in fact a limited validity. In Yankeeland just now, many decent people find themselves forced to be soldiers, while certain professional military men, though they have the physical appearance of human beings, apparently lack the spiritual qualities that distinguish man from beast.

But in real, contemporary life the white colonel, the lover of art and of mankind, is the foe of the black—the sworn, utter foe—and foes have nothing in common but no-man's-land.

That's why the book fails, for all its author's expertize and elaborate care. A work of art can only take so much arbitrary contradiction. A book—like an author—must have a central loyalty. In times of peace a man may have his New York bank balance—aesthetically speaking—and his old comrades from Caparetto as well. He may keep on good terms with them both, straddle the fence, and call it seeking after truth. But when the world becomes divided between the forces of darkness and the forces of light, then all the truth that is artistically significant coheres beneath the light. What you find in the hysterical Yankee darkness nowadays, are sharepushers and bombdroppers and their European toesuckers frenziedly edging each other on. It isn't worth while portraying them, because they are rapidly ceasing to resemble human beings, anyway.

We know better than most others how difficult it is to admit facts that are staring us in the face. There have been in the past and still are a minority of Englishmen roaming around the world like sabretoothed tigers. All those other Englishmen—and that's most of us—who have shared in their plunder, share also in their guilt.

Hemingway in his book is desperately trying at the most difficult of times to be truthful about Yankeeeland in her relations with Europe. That is what all his earnest, sobersided higher mathematics are deployed for. Indeed, that is what a great proportion of Yankee writing is about, from Irving through Henry James to T. S. Eliot.

In the past these relations were complicated enough, heaven knows.

Those who had escaped from Europe took their dreams with them—their dreams of puritan equality, of post-1848 libertarianism. They returned to visit Europe as boys go visiting a rich, cultured, eccentric and well-bred aunt living in a treasure-house of art—towards whom they feel all the mingled respect and resentment of adolescents. Hemingway hasn't wholly outgrown that frame of mind. But—as he must have discovered in 1944 when he was in Europe writing war reports for Harpers Bazaar at some thousands of dollars a go—the Yanks don't come over here any more hat in one hand, Baedeker in the other.

They are bolder, and brasher, and beastlier. They are busy turning France and Italy and England into new versions of Nicaragua and Puerto Rico and Cuba. Hemingway lives in Cuba, so he must know how we feel.

To become a European citizen no longer means, as it did for James in 1915 and Eliot in 1927, the paying of a graceful compliment to a kindlier and gentler culture than one's own. It means, on the contrary, to feel about dollar conquest disguised as sham independence rather as Ernest Hemingway's neighbours do, in Cuba. It means to talk as they do, organize as they organize. Hemingway would find it strange at first—we ourselves find it strange, having colonized others for so long. But I think he might grow to like it even better than all the silver dollars that ever came rolling hypnotically out of Hollywood.

NOTES ON GREECE

We have received a message from André Kedros on *Arena* 6:

'The publication in England of writings that witness to my people's struggle, not only does you an honour, but also does a real political and moral service to the victims of the terrible repression that continues to rage in my country. It is then in the name of a large number of Greek friends that I beg you to accept our thanks.'

Arena has printed many items which show the great strength and richness of the Resistance Literature of Greece—the passage from the necessarily anonymous poet in 2, the section of Melpo Axioti's novel in 3, Loudemis' poem in 5, Vrettakos' poem and Kedros' stories in 6: we should like to draw our readers' attention to the publication of *Greek Resistance Army, the Story of ELAS*, by General Sarafis, with foreword by Compton Mackenzie—translated by Marion Pascoe (Birch Books, 5s.)—a long and engrossing account, fully documented and based on direct personal experiences. This record by a great man of events that should touch the British conscience sharply is an addition to history.

ANNOUNCEMENT

On Sunday, 29th April, there will be held at Holborn Hall, Grays Inn Road, opening at ten a.m., a Conference and Discussion on the American Threat to British Culture (tickets 1s.), organized by the National Cultural Committee of the Communist Party of Britain. The discussion will deal with such matters as the conflict in the U.S.A. between productive power and purchasing power in books and films as well as in wheat and coca-cola; the way in which reactionary ideas are used at home and abroad; the roots of U.S. imperialist ideology—the fusion of the racist South with the cash-nexus North to beget a combination of violent repression with demagoguery about liberty (i.e. the liberty of the dollar); the true face of the States and the way in which both economically and culturally Britain is being affected. Further, the ways in which the penetration here is made possible by the link with our own reactionary trends; and the struggle needed for our national independence.

KEY POETS

'The only practical attempt I saw in 1950 to break the poetry crisis and reply to those who say that poetry is dead because poets are remote, poetry obscure—and expensive.'—John Pudney in *Public Opinion*.

'Ten booklets, costing a shilling each, printed and jacketed with delightful good taste, and containing various and lively poetry.'—*Times Literary Supplement* in a leading article.

